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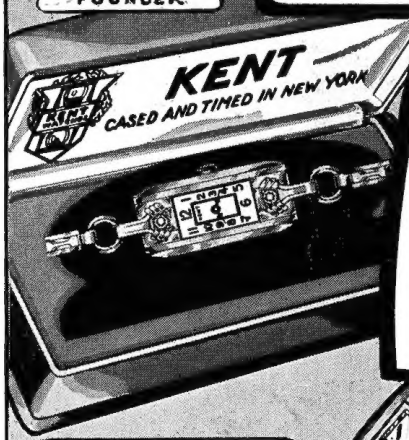

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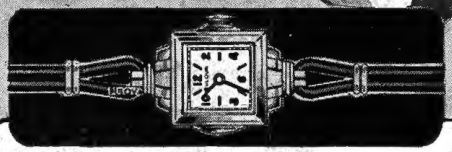

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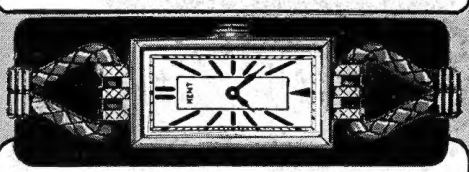

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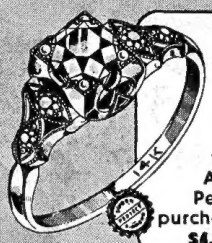

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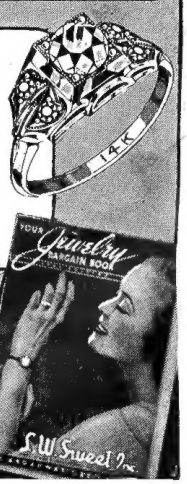

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Beware of It Spreading

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the feet. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The skin also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse and worse.

Get rid of this disease as quickly as possible, because it is very contagious and it may go to your hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

Most people who have Athlete's Foot have tried all kinds of remedies to cure it without success. Ordinary germicides, antiseptics, salve or ointments seldom do any good.

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Adventure

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Lost Trails

Luella Winans Campbell, Las Cruces, New Mexico, wants word of relatives of late Major Ira Winans, Rochester, New York, or relatives of Walter Winans, Baltimore, Md.

Where is Robert Pinkerton of 131st Company, U. S. Marine Artillery, Quantico, Va., 1917-1919? His friend Thomas P. Jordan, 1523 N. Main Ave., Scranton, Pa., queries.

William L. Harcus, Kerrville, Texas, wants news of his brother Henry (Harry) L. Harcus, Kansas City, Mo., fearing abrupt end of correspondence in 1922 meant sudden death.

Wolffe W. Roberts, Box 56, Amherst, N. H., wants word of Frank R. (Jack) Frost, last heard from at Oakland, Calif.

Richard J. Lutz, R. D. 1, Verona, Pa., would like to hear of Frank Fittante. They were marines at Quantico in 1926, when Lutz was ordered to China and Fittante to Nicaragua.

Anyone in D. Company, 15th U.S. Infantry, that went to China in 1912, or anyone in the Band of the 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers, in China 1913, 1914—write Pennock S. Broomall, 216 West 5th St., Chester, Pa.

Frank Merteul, care The Billboard, 25-27, Opera Place, Cincinnati, Ohio, wants word of a wartime friend, James (Roughhouse Jim) Novak, grenadier, voltigeur, 10th Company, First Regiment, French Foreign Legion in 1918; later transferred into Czechoslovak legion in France; last heard from 1925-1926 camping at Caddo Lake in northern Louisiana trying to recover his health.

A letter has come from Pendleton, Bangkok, Siam, for Capt. R. W. van Raven. Who knows Capt. van Raven's address?

Word wanted of Hamilton Redfield Norvell, sometimes called "Reddy" or "Curley," by his brother Stevens Thompson Norvell, 4449 Howard Ave., Western Springs, Ill. Their father died on Dec. 30, 1936. Norvell lived in Cincinnati until 1932, went to Southern Ontario.

Clarence Bailey, Cherryvale, Kansas, seeks news of Wylie Boss Smith, who sailed as oiler in June, 1934, from New Orleans on S. S. Point Salinas.

Otho Amos Duckwiler, formerly of Roanoke, Va., joined U. S. Army in 1914. Stationed Texas City, Texas, in 1914. Transferred to Field Artillery stationed Canal Zone 1918, 1919. His sister has died, and her daughter, Virginia Pulewich, 10 East 109 St., New York City, wants to get in touch with him.

Jock Miller, D D Ranch, Beeville, Texas, wants word of William Henry Miller, who left home four years ago at age of 14 and was last heard from digging gold at Ridgway, Colorado.

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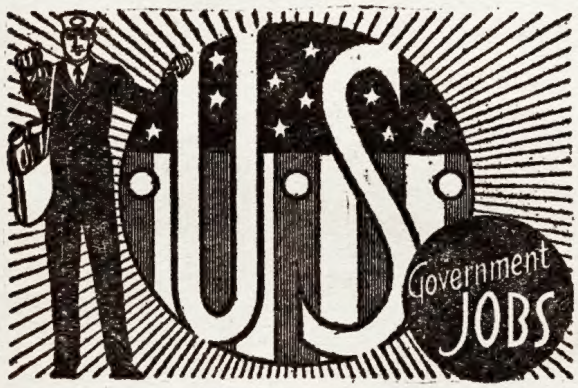

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PIGS WITHOUT BRISTLES

a novelette

by BERTRAND W. SINCLAIR

"On your way, fish-hog. You asked for this!"

OFF A KELP reef running from Hope Island, the tide and a careless lapse set Bill Steele's *Silver Swallow* down on Con Kilby's gray-hulled boat. Bill came to life a little too late. The tip of his starboard pole, sticking thirty-five feet out like a broaded-off boom, hooked into Kilby's outside line.

Bill drew clear in a shower of curses, but he snapped off the tag-line and took it with him. Bill was sorry and he felt like a fool. He said so, although it griped him to apologize to Con Kilby for anything.

Kilby's mate had the wheel and Kilby was clambering out on the bow. He stood up with a thirty-pound kedge anchor in his hairy hands.

"I've told you tramps around here to watch your step," he yelled so that every troller within half a mile could hear. "You're goin' to get it."

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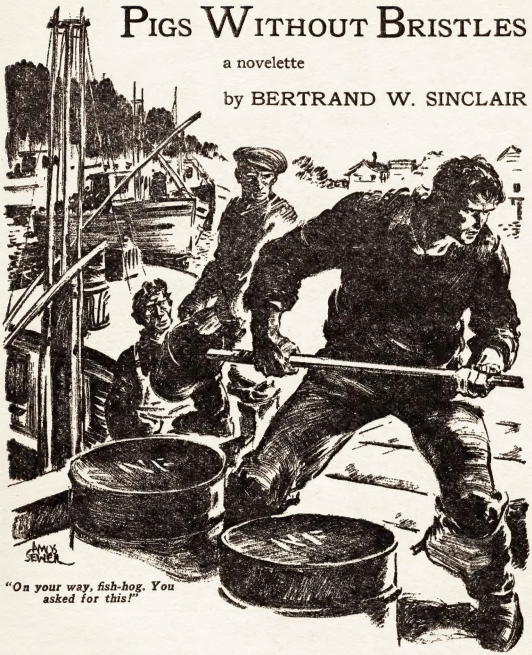

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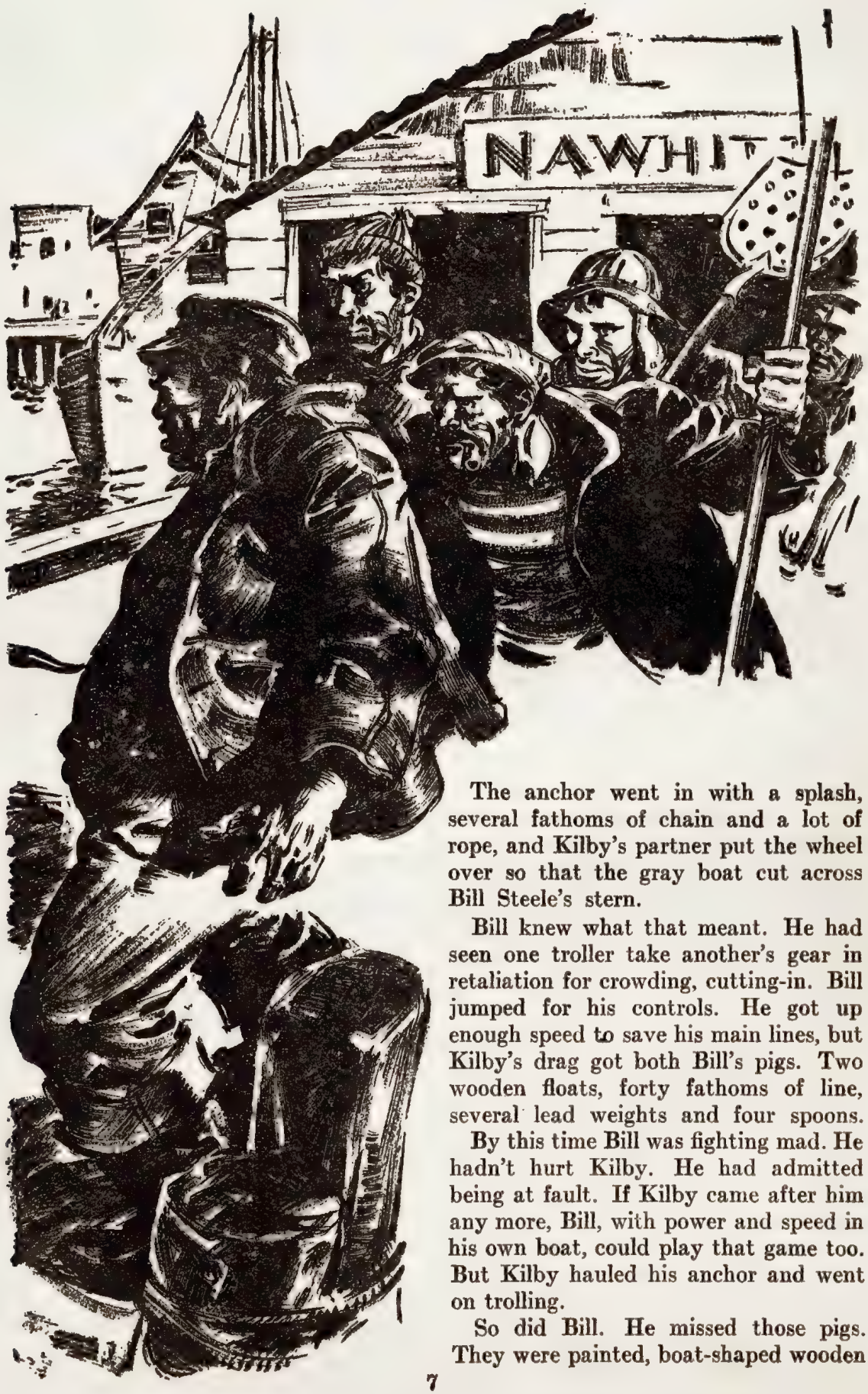
"I've told you tramps around here to watch your step," he yelled so that every troller within half a mile could hear. "You're goin' to get it."

The anchor went in with a splash, several fathoms of chain and a lot of rope, and Kilby's partner put the wheel over so that the gray boat cut across Bill Steele's stern.

Bill knew what that meant. He had seen one troller take another's gear in retaliation for crowding, cutting-in. Bill jumped for his controls. He got up enough speed to save his main lines, but Kilby's drag got both Bill's pigs. Two wooden floats, forty fathoms of line, several lead weights and four spoons.

By this time Bill was fighting mad. He hadn't hurt Kilby. He had admitted being at fault. If Kilby came after him any more, Bill, with power and speed in his own boat, could play that game too. But Kilby hauled his anchor and went on trolling.

So did Bill. He missed those pigs. They were painted, boat-shaped wooden



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By this time Bill was fighting mad. He hadn't hurt Kilby. He had admitted being at fault. If Kilby came after him any more, Bill, with power and speed in his own boat, could play that game too. But Kilby hauled his anchor and went on trolling.

So did Bill. He missed those pigs. They were painted, boat-shaped wooden

floats about three feet long, and they trailed far astern from a trigger-stick on the pole. The light line on the tip came in under the pig-line when you had to fish to haul. A West Coast salmon troller has quite a complicated system of line rigging. The more lines and spoons out, the more salmon hook on when you strike a school. Pig-lines pay their way. They work far aft of the others, taking fish that miss the first spoons.

Bill went ashore that evening, got a cedar stick and worked most of the night to get pig-lines rigged again. He had to buy more gear, too, and he was just about broke. Every jinx that ever beset a troller had camped on Bill's trail for weeks.

Kilby refused pointblank to give him back his pigs. Bill asked him, but he didn't press. He was afraid to start wrangling with Con Kilby—not afraid of Kilby, but of himself. He had been aching to take Con Kilby apart for some time, but he wanted to be sure he had good cause when he started, so that he could do a first class job. Bill was like that.

So he let it pass. He should have kept clear of Kilby's boat on that kelp reef. Bill didn't want trollers who liked him and didn't like Con Kilby saying to each other that Bill had tangled with Kilby because Kilby had got Vera Collins' roving eye fixed on him instead of Bill.

Bill had been rather chummy with Vera. But his vanity had suffered rather than his affections when she passed him up to play around with Con. Con was only thirty, yet he had the paunch of a beer-hound, a double chin, a piggy look around the eyes.

But the Kilby bankroll was fat too. Con was a top-notch salmon troller. Bill had considered himself a top-notcher, too. Lately he was beginning to doubt himself. There wasn't any doubt about the ebb of his resources. If he didn't get a break pretty soon—a good break—he was done. There had been plenty of bad luck dogging his wake all this year.

There was more to come.

WHEN he was completely rigged again, Bill took stock. Then, reluctantly, he asked Steve Collins, who had the fish camp, for some credit. He got gas, grub, some spare gear, and half a ton of ice, and put to sea two hours after everyone else that morning. He wanted the ice because he was going offshore, and he meant to lie out there all night unless he struck fish, heave in the ground swell like a chip twenty miles out in the North Pacific. The glass was steady. A man had to take a chance now and then.

Bill rocked in the ground-swell that night, sure enough. He didn't have an anchor out, because when he decided he had better anchor he was out of anchoring depths, somewhere beyond the hundred fathom line, with fog all about him, dark closing down, and a dead engine. The sort of spot salmon fishermen get in sometimes. Bill didn't worry. He was too busy. He was busy all night.

Half an hour before daylight Bill Steele came out on the after deck of the thirty-six foot *Silver Swallow,* with a sort of goofy feeling under the straw-colored hair that crowned his head. He had been breathing gas fumes, burned lubricating oil, whiffs of hot babbit metal and fish-tainted bilge water. Still he had an air of triumph.

He dangled his tired legs in the fish-hold and pulled on a cigarette, listening with a deep satisfaction to the slow, even beat of his engine. For eleven hours that motor had been dead. For eleven hours Bill had been probing in its steel and cast-iron bowels, performing what amounted to a major operation to bring it to life. His livelihood, and sometimes his life, depended on the regular beat of that mechanical heart.

Bill drooped with weariness. He

didn't know where he was, except that the mainland of British Columbia lay east in the dark and the damp fog that breeds offshore and rolls in to bedevil seafaring men all along the coast north of Puget Sound, clear to Bering Strait. West of him the Pacific, an ocean named in irony, rolled wide and free to the coast of Siberia, to Japan. Rolling in the ground-swell all night, Bill thought about that immensity of sea. If an offshore wind blew it was bad. If a westerly came up it was worse. Get blown offshore so far he couldn't get back. Get wrecked on a reef-strewn beach.

Neither contingency bothered Bill now. The old mill ticked like a clock. Daylight pretty soon. At ten o'clock the fog would melt under hot sunshine.

Bill sat resting. He didn't think so much of his tired legs, sore hands, or the empty stomach crying for hot coffee and solid food. He kept staring off into the darkness and what he saw most clearly was the fat, whitish face, the pale blue eyes, the pendulous belly of Con Kilby. Bill could see himself sinking his hard knuckles into that rounded paunch.

Probably his fist would bounce back at him as if he had struck a balloon tire on a truck. Kilby looked soft, jelly soft, but he was hard as a rock, inside and out.

"Aw, to hell with him," Bill muttered.

He went down into the galley, lit the stove, made breakfast. When he came on deck again night had folded its dark wings. All about the *Silver Swallow* gray vapors eddied and swirled like rolling smoke. Bill didn't mind thin fog, as long as he could see a hundred feet. That area lay pretty well out of the steamer track. If one came feeling her way through the fog she would go slow, bleating forlornly, like some great, lost cow.

Bill wanted to lie down and sleep, rest his tired body and burning eyes. But he needed more imperatively to catch fish. Sleep could come later.

He put down his poles and ran out his lines. The *Swallow* began to glide like a ghost across those green undulations. Bill listened to the steady beat of his engine, watched the bright, wobbling spoons sink down to flash at depths from two to fifteen fathoms below his keel. Twenty lures, brass and silver, golden bronze—metallic herrings, the salmon seemed to think.

Bill trolled a long time listening for a bell to clang with the spring of the pole when a salmon struck. Eventually he hooked one. As he hauled that line bells jangled to port and starboard. As Bill fought a forty-pound fish on the end of a line that carried thirty pounds of lead, those bells made music. He had hit a school of springs.

Action galvanized Bill Steele. He forgot being tired and sleepy. He heaved that fish in with a gaff and laid hold of another line. As fast as he could pull his lines and get them out again he hauled twelve salmon. Big salmon. Thirty-pound springs.

That lasted long enough to give Bill several authentic thrills. Then he ran out of fish. He doubled back. No good. So he headed southeast again. He wanted to make a landfall for a bearing when the fog cleared.

Around ten o'clock, while Bill steered drowsily, the fog broke into scattered wraiths, vanished altogether in a few minutes. Bill saw the purple heights of the Coast Range, the high, green palisades of Vancouver Island running down to the grim headlands of Cape Scott. To come out of that fog was like emerging from a gloomy canyon to plains bathed in sunshine, into a world of color and light that uplifted his soul.

Scanning those wide waters, Bill saw something that was no natural part of the seascape. He reached inside the wheelhouse for a pair of Zeiss binoculars, focussed them.

"I'll be damned," he said. He kept on trolling for another twenty minutes,

staring from time to time at that object with glasses that gave him seven-league eyes.

Then he began to haul his lines. Gear stowed, he hoisted poles, lashed them alongside the mast, shoved the throttle open. The *Swallow* stepped along at seven and a half knots.

The speck became visible to the naked eye. It took form and color. After a long furrow plowed across those smooth swells Bill slowed down to ease alongside a twelve-foot dinghy in which a girl sat drooping over a pair of varnished oars.

THERE were two black leather cases and a yellow slicker in the bottom of the dinghy. She lifted her head to stare at Bill. He didn't know whether she was going to laugh or cry. She had smooth brown hair with bronze glints in the sun, eyes that were sort of gray-green, like the sea, and her face was easy to look at.

"Pardon me," said Bill, "if I seem to intrude."

"The intrusion is welcome," she said with a slightly tremulous smile. Her voice had a husky, low note.

"Would you be getting aboard?" Bill asked casually. "Or have you got business to attend to away offshore in a twelve-foot dinghy?"

"I was trying to get to Shushartie Bay around Cape Scott," she said. "Last night. It got dark. Then it got foggy. I must have drifted a long way in the night. When the fog cleared I couldn't seem to make headway rowing."

"The speed of the current is about three knots maximum. The set is always northwest and never southeast at any hour of the day or night because of tidal influence," Bill quoted almost verbatim from the B. C. Coast Pilot Book.

The girl stood up. A strand of brown hair fell over her face. She tucked it behind one ear. She handed Bill Steele both her bags and the slicker and stepped up on the *Silver Swallow's* deck.

Bill was holding the dinghy with one toe hooked inside the gunwale.

"Would you be wanting this rowboat any more?" he asked dryly.

"We-ell—" She seemed undecided. Bill bent for the painter and made it fast to a cleat on the stern. The girl sat down on a box by the mast. She rested her hands in her lap and studied Bill.

"Hungry?" he asked.

"Starved—and thirsty."

He got her a glass of water. She gulped it, and a second. Bill's eyes, turning away from that avid swallowing, got a flash of something to the southwest. He picked up his glasses, stared for a long time. Then he went down into the galley and started a fire in the stove. The girl didn't speak. She stared at the deck. While the kettle came to a boil Bill got on top of the pilot-house and trained his glasses southwest again.

He saw the tops of two varnished masts. One had a small set of crosstrees. Straddle of those a man sat with a telescope trained on the *Silver Swallow*. The curve of the sea hid the hull of the ship under those masts. This was what Bill had seen the first time and the setup remained the same.

Bill didn't mention that. But he did some thinking while he fried two eggs and slices of bacon and several pieces of toast.

She sat on Bill's bunk and ate off a hinged table let down from a bulkhead. No doubt about her hunger.

Bill had something to eat, too, in silence. Then he went on deck and took another look with the glasses. That distant observer was still on the crosstrees, using his telescope. Bill surmised the fellow could see him quite clearly. They must have spotted that girl adrift in a dinghy before Bill did. That hull-down craft was hove-to. Why?

The hull that carried those two masts lifted a bit on a bigger and better ground-swell. Bill got a glimpse of her

upper works. He laid the glasses down with a grunt. He knew her. It was properly that vessel's business to pick up castaways, and not leave the job to a troller. Again—why? Bill lifted his binoculars again. That telescope was still aimed at him. Moved by an undefined impulse, Bill put his thumb to his nose and waggled his fingers.

BILL glanced inside. The girl had finished. She lay back, her brown head on his pillow. By the way one arm drooped slack, she was asleep. Bill verified that when he stood over her. Not a bad-looking jane. Clear skin, nicely tanned. Her lips were slightly parted over clean, even teeth.

Bill primed the engine, rolled the flywheel. At the wheeze and clank the girl lifted her head, heavy-eyed, awake but not startled.

"I fish for a living," Bill said. "Got to be at it. Go on having your sleep."

She closed her eyes without a word.

Bill shot his gear, looked at the salmon in the box. He needed a lot more before he steamed back to Bull Harbor. He wondered at the persistence of the jinx that had ridden his masthead all season. He was in the hole instead of being several hundred to the good.

"Maybe she'll bring me luck," he murmured, with no faith in the notion. Women were the father of all jinxes, in Bill's recent experience. He was confirmed in that whenever he thought of Con Kilby—and he thought of Con oftener than he liked.

He laid a course dead on a small bight halfway between Cape Scott and Nawhitti Bar. If the lady castaway wanted to get to Shushartie he would get her there—in his own time.

The deep lines cut the smooth swell with faint hissings. The exhaust went *ka-choog, ka-choog,* dead slow. Nothing happened for a long time. A gray-green sweep of water made a great circle in which the *Silver Swallow* was the only thing that moved. Of the ninety-odd trollers based on Bull Harbor not one was in sight.

"They must be all hull down north of Hope," Bill reflected. "Or maybe a run has started at Bates Pass. Damn it, I miss all the good runs. I'm always somewhere else."

A bow-line bell tinkled. As he reached for the tag-line a main pole sprung in an arc. Bill grabbed that one. Heavy strikes meant big fish. Both deep lines started jigging. And then both pig-lines streamed far astern. Bill's gear was loaded.

"Whoops, m'dear," Bill whispered. "We're off to the races."

It was like pulling a succession of fifty pound anchors. Sometimes he had a double on the three-spoon lines. Bill had no gurdy gear. It was all hand work, bull work. But every time one of those big silver babies flopped into the fish-box it was the equivalent of three dollars in Bill's pocket.

"Maybe the dame did bring me luck," Bill thought. "Something did."

For an hour as he steered southeast the salmon struck continuously. Then he ran out of them, swung about and steered the same course reversed. In twenty minutes the salmon were striking as if they swallowed brass by the doctor's orders.

Over a patch five miles square Bill eventually delimited a school of springs, mostly big fish, voraciously taking his lures.

THE sun rose to its zenith, began its slow westward drift. A breeze rippled the smooth sea. Those purple-blue hills behind Bull Harbor were a long way off. Bill wiped his hands and looked at his watch. Time for chow, by the emptiness inside. It would take him four hours to make shelter. And he was half dead on his feet.

Yet he hated to quit, even to cook and eat. Salmon were where you found them, like gold in the hills. He had this great school all to himself. When he sold that catch in Bull Harbor seventy boats would follow him out—if they could.

Bill was staring into his fish box when the castaway came out of the cabin. Her gray eyes widened at sight of that mass of silver scales.

"Maybe I brought you luck while I slept," she said.

Bill Steele shrugged his shoulders. Vera Collins had said to him in Bull Harbor, "I'll bring you luck, Bill." (And look at me now, Bill thought.)

"Sister, you wanted to go to Shushartie Bay," he said.

"I started for there," she answered.

"Where'd you come from?"

"Goose Harbor," she told him.

It was possible, but Bill didn't believe her, even with all night and part of a forenoon and the steady nor-west set of the west coast tide.

The bells were clanging. Bill landed three fish, batted them over the head at the stern and gaffed them in. He hated to quit, but he had to call it a day.

"Look," he said, "I have hit the darndest salmon fishing, and I want to hit this school again in the morning. So I can't take you to Shushartie tonight."

"Well," she said, "I don't have to get to Shushartie Bay tonight. What will you do? Lie out here?"

"Can't chance that," Bill shook his head. "I don't know what this wind might amount to. There's a creek mouth on Vancouver Island I can get into at dusk and get out of before daylight. Safe anchorage. I haven't had any sleep for two nights. Tomorrow night I'll unload at Bull Harbor and take you across to Shushartie."

"Okay by me," she nodded.

"Can you steer a compass course?" he asked.

She took the wheel in the pilot house, with the main compass under her eyes. Bill had a small telltale compass let into his deck aft for trolling. He lit the galley stove and put the kettle on. Then he went back to the little cockpit and began to dress fish, watching the telltale. Yes, she could steer by compass. When the *Silver Swallow* yawed on a swell and fell off a point the girl set her a point the other way to compensate and then steadied on the course.

Bill devoted himself to dressing salmon. He laid them in neat rows, admiring them. He still had a few hundred pounds of ice.

His catch would keep fresh another twenty-four hours. Engrossed in his job, he didn't pay much attention until the girl handed him hot coffee and a cheese sandwich. He downed that gratefully, and finished his fish job.

If that school stayed put so that he could work on them all day tomorrow—Well, maybe there was such a thing as luck.

CHAPTER II

GOLDEN TRAIL

HE eased the *Silver Swallow* into that creek mouth at dusk, into a deep pool inside a bar that could only be crossed at high tide. Cedar and spruce boughs overhung the bank. High hills loomed dimly above. The sky was dotted with stars. Utter stillness, except for the spaced mutter of a slow ground-swell breaking on the beach. Clear and calm.

Bill stretched on a pipe berth slung in the forward part of the cabin. He could hear drowsily the regular breathing of the girl in his bunk. Funny to be sleeping so close to a strange woman that he could touch her if he stretched an arm.

And she *was* a strange woman, Bill decided. Cool, curiously assured in this unconventional situation. No nonsense

about this dame. She offered no explanations, asked no personal questions.

Bill eased the *Swallow* out on a high tide an hour before daybreak. Out into fog, the regular morning fog. Bill ran time and compass courses to what he judged the proper spot, dropped his poles and ran his lines. The salmon were waiting for him. Surrounded by fog, going blind, he landed one fish after another on the deck with a resounding *plop*. He became aware finally of a slightly disheveled brown head framed in the wheelhouse door, a pair of gray eyes observing him.

"Did you have breakfast?" she asked.

"Coffee before I started," Bill said.

"Could you do with eggs and bacon?"

"Could I?" Bill echoed. "Two eggs, chef. One fried on one side and one on the other."

Presently the bacon and eggs were at hand. Bill ate with the afterdeck for a table, hauled two or three salmon while he ate.

High overhead the morning sun evaporated the fog. When it cleared Bill saw exactly what he wanted to see: the *Silver Swallow* was alone on the wide, wide ocean. An ocean full of tiny darting streaks of silver—young herring. Among and below the herring the salmon preyed on these little fish and took Bill's spoons as if they were choice morsels.

The girl came out and sat on a box, watched Bill, smoked a cigarette. There came a slack interval. Bill sat in the stern sheets, tiller under the deck between his knees.

"My name," he said, "is Bill Steele."

"Mine," said she, "is Gail Martin."

There didn't seem to be anything more to say. The *Swallow* went ghosting along. There came flurries when all Bill's lines jerked and the poles bent quivering. *Hiyu* salmon. Bill wondered if this run was general, if the fleet was in on the killing. For Bill it *was* a killing—the kind that salmon trollers tell about in winter camps, on town streets. "Time we made a thousand bucks apiece in six days in Hecate Strait—or Fitzhugh Sound, or off Kyuquot.

The gods that watch over fishermen knew that Bill Steele needed to make a killing. He owed Steve Collins for supplies. He owed a big final payment on his engine. All the misfortunes of the early season, Vera Collins, and finally Con Kilby had just about wrecked Bill Steele's morale.

But this was restoring it amply.

YOU DON'T NEED A "RICH UNCLE"!

It would be thrilling to inherit a lot of money . . . But there's a bigger thrill in making it *yourself*—in being your *own* "rich uncle!" And you can make it a whole lot easier for yourself if you remember this: Your biggest help toward success is Good Health!

But you *can't* be healthy if you're constipated. Perhaps, nothing does so much to pull down your energy and dull your ambition. Poisonous wastes in your system always drag at your health. You *can't* keep at the top of your form unless you get rid of them.

So if *you* want to feel better, if you want to step up your energy, if you want a quick mind and a vigorous body, remember this one thing—*see that your bowels move regularly!*

But the way you move your bowels is important. Instead of taking a laxative that disturbs your system and upsets your stomach, take gentle Ex-Lax.

Ex-Lax limits its action entirely to the intestines, where the actual constipation exists. It gives the intestines a *gentle nudge,* emptying the bowels thoroughly—but easily and comfortably.

Ex-Lax works in such a simple, common-sense way. And it is such a pleasure to take. Ex-Lax tastes just like delicious chocolate. Available at all drug stores in economical 10c and 25c sizes. (In Canada—15c and 35c.)

Noon passed. Except for short periods the salmon bit steadily. Bill's wrists, fingers, shoulders and back ached from the strain of pulling lines. His fingers were abraded from wire leaders and hook points, in spite of rubber protectors. But he didn't mind. The *Swallow's* fishbox was full. Bill laid them in rows on deck, covered with canvas. He watched the barometer, the sky, the sea and the distant land. He was a long way offshore.

At four-thirty he pulled his gear and cocked up his poles. The *Silver Swallow* could make Bull Harbor by sunset.

Unload and wash down and get to bed. Roll out at two-thirty and go to sea again. Aw, hell, he had to take this jane to Shushartie Bay!

Gail Martin lay on top of the cabin, her head on a cushion. Bill looked at her over the wheel in the little house. Near Nawhitti Bar the swells began to lift the *Swallow*, make her run on each crest, green water foaming by her hull. The sun became like a massive orange teetering on the rim of the world, tinting the shores ahead with delicate rose-pink, laying a strange unearthly brilliance on distant mountains with caps of snow that were never doffed.

Gail sat up, moved over to the windows of the wheelhouse, her face within a foot of Bill Steele's.

"I don't want to go to Shushartie Bay," she said calmly. "I don't want to go back to town. I want to stay on the sea and bake in this sun. Can I make you a business proposition, Bill Steele?"

Bill stared a minute.

"Sure. Make any kind of a proposition you want," he said. "I'll listen."

"I WANT to stay aboard the *Silver Swallow* a month," Gail said. "I can cook and steer. I might be able to pull lines occasionally. I'll pay my share of the living expenses. I can be useful."

"You can also be a damned nuisance," Bill said, not unkindly.

"How?"

"Well, this is fair weather fishing," Bill told her. "Times, trolling salmon, you stand on your ear from morning till night. Sometimes you take a hell of a beating to get fish. You have to. Not many women can stand that. Darned few want to."

"I can," Gail said.

"And," Bill went on, "we'll be part of a fleet. There'd be an ungodly lot of chatter."

"Well, that wouldn't bother me," she said calmly. "If I'm behaving myself, I don't care what people say. Do you?"

"What in blazes are you after?" Bill asked. "Heading out of Goose Harbor in the evening to row to Shushartie Bay don't sound like a good story."

"Why?" Gail's gray eyes were inquiring calmly.

Bill looked at the white lapstrake dinghy towing astern. He remembered the watcher at the cross-trees of a varnished mast, observing Gail Martin aboard the *Silver Swallow*.

"Oh, I guess it don't concern me," he said, "what you may have up your sleeve besides your arm. I'm just not certain about you staying aboard this packet."

"I would like it," she said. "I would like to lie on this deck and stare at the sea and the sky. I'm tired. I want to loaf. Do I need to recite all my reasons for wanting to do this? You have acted like the sort of fellow who wouldn't put the wrong slant on a woman who wanted to do something a little out of the ordinary. Or is it going to involve you in anything to have a woman aboard? Maybe you're not—well, completely unattached. I suppose that would put the bee on my brilliant notion."

"If this is your notion of a holiday," Bill frowned, "well, I'm completely unattached. No femme is going to tear your hair out for being aboard the

Silver Swallow. Just the same—"

Bill stopped. There were all kinds of arguments against it. He was not going to encourage Gail Martin in this weird notion.

"Aw, hell," he said, "what do you want to do this for?"

"Because I want to," she smiled.

"Typical woman's reason," Bill growled.

"Granted," said she. "Well, I asked you a fair question. What's the answer? You'll have to make up your mind before we get in, and we're almost up to Nawhitti Bar."

"You seem to know these waters," Bill remarked.

"I can read charts," she replied. "Can I stay on your boat for a month, if I pay my way?"

"Yes," Bill decided suddenly. "And your blood be on your own head."

GAIL went into the cabin and came out with a piano accordion under her arm, an instrument all mother of pearl and silver. She sat on the top deck and coaxed entrancing little tunes out of that wind box as they foamed across Nawhitti Bar. Where they turned into the gut of Bull Harbor she stopped making music, asked Bill Steele:

"Have you always trolled salmon?"

"Me?" Bill snapped out of deep thought. "Fourth season. Started with a row boat and a hand line in the Gulf of Georgia. Lived on beans, flapjacks and clams until I got a twenty-six foot gasboat. Last year I got this packet built and started fishing offshore. Mortgaged my soul for her, on the strength of one good season. Guess I'll pay off the mortgage—" he glanced down at the fish-box—"if I get a few more days like this."

"Before that?" Gail prompted.

"I was just about ready to be eased into a job when the balloon burst," Bill grinned. "You know. '29 and all that. The family went up higher than a kite. The old man is now a bookkeeper in a firm he once owned. I was on the tramp for a couple of years before I started salmon fishing. I just kept out of relief camps by the skin of my teeth."

"Is it a good life, trolling?" Gail asked.

"For those who get good at it, yes," Bill nodded. "Me, I would rather live in a tent under a tree and be my own boss than ride to work in a sedan and take orders from somebody at so much a week."

"A steady job has its merits," Gail said.

"Oh, sure," Bill agreed. "But I've noticed that people with steady jobs would escape from them if they could."

"Yes," Gail admitted thoughtfully. "I have a steady job, and I'm escaping from it temporarily. People are funny that way."

Bill didn't follow that up. The *Swallow* was nosing into a Bull Harbor fish camp. Dusk was closing down.

Bill began to fork fish out on the scow. An ice house for fish storage took up one end, a store and two living rooms the other. In the covered space between gas tanks and scales and drums of oil Steve Collins lit two gasoline lanterns. They shed a brilliant white glow. A few trollers were tied to the scow. The harbor was full of anchored boats.

Two or three fishermen appeared when Bill tied up. Others came as he kept slapping fish out on the wet boards. Still more came as his pile grew to a silver mound. Bill could hear them mutter among themselves. Steve Collins leaned on his picaroon, grinning. More fish, more commission. Con Kilby came out of the store at last, and Vera followed him. Kilby's pot belly sagged the waistband of his trousers. Vera's arm rubbed against Con's elbow.

Bill could fairly feel their interest, the subdued excitement. He had never delivered a cargo like that. Collins had

been a trifle reluctant to let him have grub and gas and ice on credit for that trip. Bill didn't know of anyone else having put in a load like that on Collin's scow. It made him feel good.

"Hell's bells an' panther tracks!" Bill heard Collins mutter when he took the weight of the last batch on the scales and totaled the weight. Bill had checked those weights too. Three thousand pounds of salmon.

While Collins counted money into his hand Bill heard a low buzz. He had been expecting that. Gail had remained below while he forked fish. Now she stepped up on the scow, walked past the crowd of fishermen in that white glare, her gaze calmly impersonal, indifferent, into the store. Vera Collins, black eyes wide, hurried after her, burning with curiosity. It amused Bill. He had supplied Bull Harbor with two sensations that night. Steve Collins waggled his dark beard at Bill Steele.

"Who's the lady, Bill?" he asked in low, astonished tones.

"Friend of mine from town," Bill said curtly.

Con Kilby moved over to where Bill stood with his picaroon in one hand and a sheaf of ten-dollar bills in the other.

"Where'd you hit the fish, Bill?" he asked.

"Wouldn't you like to know," Bill said.

"Three thousand pounds," Steve Collins said as if it were something incredible.

"You don't have to get snooty because you're high boat—for once," Kilby said in his high-pitched voice.

Other fishermen pressed close to Bill, men he knew and liked. They didn't ask questions. Kilby's pale blue eyes narrowed in his whitish face. He made another remark, slightly derogatory by inference.

Bill balanced the picaroon, a four-foot ash shaft with a curved, needle-pointed steel prong at one end. A tool to handle slippery, heavy, scale-armored fish.

"If I stuck this into your belly, Con," Bill said dispassionately, "I wonder if anything but wind would come out?"

Somebody laughed.

"I tell you where I got these salmon, Con," Bill went on. "I got them outa the water."

Another snicker ran around the group.

Gail Martin came out of the store with some packages. Bill kept a poker face as she hopped down on deck and went below. She had on a gray skirt, a red sweater and neat white leather brogues. She looked like somebody. And she didn't give a damn for anybody or anything anybody might have to say. Some dame! Bill Steele didn't quite know what to make of her. And yet he had that silly feeling of pride in her attitude, her calm assurance, as if in effect she said: "Well here I am, and what is your gaping curiosity to me?"

When Bill cast off and eased away from the scow the last thing he saw was Con Kilby and Vera, Steve Collins and several fishermen peering down at the *Silver Swallow* as if they were trying to pierce the cabin walls with their eyes.

SLIPPING through the anchorage, Bill flicked his searchlight about until he discovered a trio of boats lashed side by side, riding to one anchor. The *Condor, Bold Mary* and *Manchu.*

They were a closed corporation, those three. Going hounds. High boats in any fleet. They had been pretty decent to Bill Steele. A head poked out as Bill slid alongside.

"Hello, Bill. We were beginning to wonder about you," Nick Harmon said. "Collins said you took ice, so we figured you were scouting."

Nick Harmon's wife said: "Want a cup of coffee, Bill?"

"Got the pot on, thanks," Bill answered. He didn't want to spring Gail on Judy Harmon tonight. Mel Adams

put his head out the *Condor's* hatch.

"Lissen," Bill lowered his voice. "I hit a thundering school of fish. Here's the compass bearings off Cape Scott and Mexicana Point!"

Bill passed over a slip of paper.

"They're there plenty," Bill went on. "I got three thousand pounds."

"Good lad," Mel Adams said. "You got a break at last. Nobody got much today or yesterday. We better travel early. The fleet'll be on your tail, Bill."

"If they can follow in the fog they're welcome," Bill laughed. "Good night."

Anchored up, Bill sat on his bunk, bowed with weariness. He would get exactly four hours sleep. Gail handed him coffee.

"I heard what you said to the fat man," she remarked. "Was that nice? Who is he?"

"Just another troller," Bill said. "Name of Con Kilby."

Gail lay back against a cushion, sipping coffee. Bill got up and drew a curtain into place. He heard her cup clink in the galley sink and the creak as she got into bed. Bill said from his bunk in the darkness:

"There's a flock of people in Bull Harbor with their ears pricked up right now, wondering what you're doing aboard my boat."

"Wouldn't they be surprised if they knew?" Gail answered.

That didn't seem quite clear to Bill Steele, but he was too sleepy to ponder its ambiguity.

CHAPTER III

VENGEANCE CODE

THE fleet followed Bill and his three confidants over Nawhitti Bar before daylight, but they shook the fleet in dense fog. And so the four trollers had that school of springs to themselves until the fog lifted, a little before noon. After that, others got in on the big school of big fish, but it didn't matter. The run was general. Salmon could be taken anywhere.

For no clear reason Bill Steele, who had been low boat all season, became high boat every day. Like any bold gambler, Bill pressed his luck hard. He went out early and stayed late.

All the days weren't clear and calm. Bill didn't mind rough and tumble on Nawhitti Bar, nor outside. Neither, apparently, did Gail. The *Silver Swallow* fished offshore when the rest of the fleet, except the *Condor, Manchu* and *Bold Mary*, stayed in the sheltered area of Bate Pass.

Gail could cook good food while the *Swallow* squirmed and tumbled so that Bill's hips were bruised by the coaming of the little cockpit where he stood to handle gear. Bill didn't tell Gail Martin that she helped a lot. He didn't understand why she was there at all, taking the sort of maritime beatings he handed her in his quest for salmon. He wondered aloud about that.

"Oh, put on a new record," Gail said. "I'm here because I want to be. That's reason enough."

A couple of hours later she shook Bill out of a doze. The *Swallow* moved with a cradling motion in a slow swell. Bill had gone to sleep at the stick.

"Fellow," Gail said, "you'd better ease back to port and get a real sleep. Do you *have* to fish as if your life depended on it?"

"I don't fish for fun," Bill uttered a half truth.

"You've made nine hundred dollars in eight days," Gail said. "Don't be a hog."

Bill didn't bother explaining that it took just about that sum to square him with the world. He had smarted for weeks under comparative failure. Low boat. He aspired to be high boat. Even if he died on his feet for lack of sleep, he wouldn't stay in when he could be

out getting salmon. He wanted to be free of debt. He wanted a stake in real money.

A couple of days later the weather gave him a respite. His feet hit the floor with the first clang of the alarm clock. Then he stopped to listen, peered outside, felt sharp puffs of air on his heavy eyelids. The subdued roar of breaking seas welled in the darkness. Wind moaned in the trees on Hope Island. A nor-wester whooped in Goletas Channel. No boat would cross Nawhitti Bar in that. Bill went back to his bunk.

HE SLEPT until noon. Gail Martin and the dinghy were gone when he got up. When he spotted her on the scow, sitting on an oil drum talking to Con Kilby, Bill scowled. Well, that's *her* business, he thought. She had been swimming. At least she had nothing on but a scarlet bathing suit. She sat there a long time, talking to the fisherman. Vera Collins kept shuttling in and out of the store.

Bill saw Gail row over to the *Manchu* with Judy Harmon and little Golly Harmon, aged four. In a couple of hours she came back to the *Swallow*, swimming, shoving the dinghy ahead of her. She went up into the little cubby hole forward, changed into proper clothes and came out on the back deck, fluffing out her brown hair to dry in the sun.

"I had a lot of fun today," she told Bill. "I talked to all kinds of people and I was invited aboard the *Manchu*. Judy Harmon is rather a dear, isn't she?"

Bill admitted that Judy was.

"There seems to be quite a few women on boats here," Gail went on. "Nobody seems to care a hoot.

"They wouldn't say so," Bill growled. "They're here to catch salmon. Sure, there's women in any trolling fleet. They're the ones that talk."

"Let 'em," Gail said brightly. She was more animated than Bill had ever seen her. Almost gay, as if she had suddenly come alive.

"This is the first real chance I've had to look around in broad day," she went on. "To see all the fleet in at anchor, and everything. By the way, Bill, is Con Kilby a first chop fisherman?"

"Yes," Bill admitted.

"You don't like Mr. Kilby much?" Gail looked at him intently.

"Correct," Bill replied. "You interested in Mr. Kilby?"

"His appearance interests me," she seemed thoughtful. "He's so very porky, and yet I have a notion he might be dynamite in some ways. You used to be quite palsy-walsy with Vera Collins, didn't you Bill? And Vera succumbed to the quaint Kilby charm. Is that why you've got a down on him?"

"You seem to have got an earful," Bill said sourly.

"Sure," Gail nodded. "I've been making the rounds. And they do talk large and free in their hours of ease, don't they? This is the first time I've mixed much."

"Okay," Bill said. "Make the most of it. You've only got two weeks to go."

"Oh—oh, yes," Gail murmured. "The bargain was for a month, wasn't it? Are you going to kick me off the *Silver Swallow* the moment the thirty days are up?"

Bill didn't attempt to answer. Gail smiled mischievously.

"I thought a good rest would restore your naturally sunny disposition. It seems to work in reverse."

Bill remained silent. He didn't know himself why he felt morose, annoyed.

"Look," Gail said in a more serious tone. "Apart from fishing, do you know anything about Con Kilby?"

"No," Bill said, "and I don't want to."

He sat staring at the anchored fleet. White boats, green boats, drab grays, lifting a forest of swaying trolling poles. Nawhitti Bar was a sight. Green, white-topped combers, marching one be-

hind the other. Bill could almost hear the snoring of those seas. The wind blew the tops off in sheets of spray. A forty-foot troller would last about as long out there as a snowball in hell.

Bill went up forward and changed his clothes. He had shaved and brushed back that straw-colored hair so that it wasn't quite so wind-blown. Bill had clear skin, tanned golden brown. His eyes were deep blue and full of light, now that sleep weariness was gone. He looked at himself in a little mirror and compared himself with Con Kilby. The comparison brought a sardonic grin to his face. Then he went aft and got into the dinghy and rowed away.

"That femme is getting under my skin," he thought resentfully. "A girl on board a boat is nothing but a damn disturbance."

THE TROLLERS put to sea next morning, in a breathless dawn. They wallowed in a huge smooth-topped swell. It was crystal clear. The wind had banished fog, but the fog always came back. Those smoky battalions formed in the night to march across the sea.

The *Silver Swallow* plowed a lone furrow at noon, in the breathless heat of August. The fleet had scattered far. One speck crawling those wastes Bill identified as Kilby's gray boat. Con's was one of the few two-man outfits. His mate was an inoffensive incompetent called Kelpie Brown. They covered a lot of territory and took a lot of salmon.

Kilby passed a few fathoms to port.

"No salmon," Kilby yelled. "You won't be high boat today, Steele."

"Stay to loo'ard, you big cheese," Bill retorted. "I don't like the smell of you."

Kilby's packet was a bit overripe, but that wasn't what Bill meant. Kilby went on. They moved slowly apart. Bill went out to sea for half an hour. Coming back, he marked Kilby trolling over a shoal patch—least depth seven fathoms. Bill decided Kilby might be getting salmon around that shoal, so he headed up there.

Off in the southward a smoke pennant became a ship. The ship took form as a six-thousand ton freighter, heading northeast. Bill made a complete circle of that mound in the ocean depths without getting a strike. Kilby kept marching back and forth across it. Bill headed off toward land. No gain there, even if Kilby kept up that persistent patrol.

A mile off, Bill leaned against the cabin, staring through his glasses.

"I'll be darned," said he. "That steamer is going right across the bank. Almost like he was trying to run Con Kilby down. That seven-fathom patch is marked plain on the chart. Some goofy navigator. If I drew twenty-five feet I'd like more water under my keel."

"Can you see her name?" Gail asked, a lively interest in her tone.

"*Sirius,*" Bill said. He could read her letters easily. Six thousand tons of rusty steel hull shut Kilby off at that moment.

"Can I have a look?" Gail asked eagerly.

Bill handed her the binoculars. If a tramp steamer plowed across a shoal he didn't care. Maybe the *Sirius* wanted to scrape the barnacles off her bottom on a rock, the way whales did.

Gail kept the glasses focussed. Kilby's gray boat appeared on the sea, lying broadside-to, motionless. The steamer passed on.

"Kilby has anchored," Gail announced.

That didn't interest Bill. He stood away on his inshore course. No fish. He kept right on toward Bull Harbor. The Kilby craft, lying on the shoal, became a mere dot. It was a long time before Gail gave over scanning the sea with those glasses. They had a pot of tea. Gail's eyes kept turning sternward. Little lines of concentration radiated from her narrowed eyes.

Bill made port at four-thirty. None of the boats had struck fish in any number. Sometimes salmon wouldn't bite after a stiff blow.

Kilby came in about dusk. Shortly afterward Mel Adams brought the *Condor* up beside the *Swallow* to swap fish stories. Mel told Bill that he and Bill Small and Nick Harmon had struck a run of coho salmon the other side of Hope Island.

"Oke," Bill nodded. Mel wouldn't tell anybody else. In that trolling fleet everybody hunted his own fish and the devil take the hindmost.

THERE was one place on that kelp reef where salmon would always bite at a spoon: where the brown weed mat spanned a ledge that pitched into deep water abruptly as a giant step.

Every time Bill and his three compadres swung across that point, from one to five fish hooked on. So they shaved that kelp one behind the other.

By mid-forenoon a sizeable fleet of boats had joined the parade, moving in an endless circle. There were so many it took each boat a long time to get a shot at that point where the salmon apparently darted out from the kelp to take a spoon.

The fellow who swings out of line and tries to cut in ahead of the others simply begs for trouble. Con Kilby had a heavy boat and stout gear and an inclination to be high-handed. He cut in ahead of the *Silver Swallow,* crowded in with his starboard side to Bill's port.

Bill had the right of way. Kilby bore in until their pole-tips almost touched. Bill had a choice of sheering off into the kelp, fouling his lines. He could speed up and pass Kilby. He could slow up and let Kilby go ahead, getting two whacks at that point where he was only entitled to one. Bill held his course and speed.

Gail Martin, looking now at Bill and then at Kilby's boat, said under her breath:

"What is he trying to do? If you both keep on there'll be a collision."

"There'll be a collision, all right," Bill said in a flat tone.

"Hey, gimme room," Kilby yelled.

He loomed large on his afterdeck, with his hand on a rudder stick. His cheeks seemed to puff out with his own importance.

Bill leaped for his controls, sheered a little toward the kelp. The *Swallow* lost way. Kilby began to draw ahead.

Then Bill put his wheel hard over. He ran forward, heaved an anchor over the bow. The chain rattled to the bitter end.

The *Swallow* cut square across Kilby's stern. As she gathered way, that deep anchor picked up all Con Kilby's lines and tore them off the poles like so much

It was dirty crossing.

grass under the steel claws of a rake.

There was a rending and snapping of trigger sticks, cowbells uttering wild clanks. Kilby's poles bent and spring. The top of one broke ten feet inboard.

Thirty-odd boats watched this affray. The *Silver Swallow* had power and a fast pickup. Bill didn't stop with the lines. He hadn't opened his mouth. He swung in a short circle and came up on Kilby full speed.

"Better duck below," he warned Gail. When she didn't move he grabbed her by the shoulder and forced her down behind the cabin, just as the *Swallow* drove her stem into Kilby's port pole and smashed it with a fine splintering of wood. Bill's bow pole, like a spear, took away some of Kilby's fore-rigging. He made another circle and came back alongside Kilby, slowed down. He hadn't taken his eyes off Con Kilby, and Bill's right hand had never been very far from a Mannlicher rifle on pegs just inside the cabin door. He held the *Swallow* right against Kilby's boat, rub-strakes bumping.

"You pot-bellied fish-hog!" Bill said then. "Do I hear you say anything? You asked for this, Kilby. Just slobber a threat or two so I can step aboard and slap your head up to a peak."

"My pigs!" Kilby squawked. "You got my pigs."

Bill glanced astern. Kilby's pigs were bobbing aft, fouled in his own lines.

"You took mine three weeks ago," Bill snarled. "I'll keep these for souvenirs. On your way, fish-hog!"

Bill watched Kilby pull out of the line. He put Gail at the wheel and kept his own place while he set things right. He had spring and a bowpole and snapped a tag-line or two. When he took in his anchor he retrieved most of Kilby's gear, fathoms of line, a lot of lead weights, spoons—and both Kilby's pigs. They were fine pigs. Smoothly finished, glossy with red paint.

"Kilby sure hated to lose his pigs," Bill grinned. "Maybe a fellow feeling for a fellow creature. Here, stick 'em up on top the cabin."

Gail took hold of the one he handed her.

"Why, they're light," she said.

"Yes. Cedar. Sometimes the boys hollow them," Bill said. "These look solid, but they're not very heavy for their size."

Kilby got his wrecked poles aboard and steamed away. Bill went right on trolling. Now and then some other boat passed close aboard and somebody would say, "Good work, Bill."

"You seem to have plenty of moral support," Gail remarked.

"These fellows know that Kilby is a hog," Bill observed. "And the only way to get along with a hog is to club him on the snout."

WHEN the *Swallow* tied up to unload a fair catch, Con Kilby rather diffidently approached Bill Steele.

"Say, maybe I was a little raw, crowdin' you that way," he admitted. "You took about seventy dollars worth of gear off me. Save me quite a lot of work if you'd let me have them pigs."

"Try and get 'em," Bill said curtly.

Kilby looked longingly at the bright red pigs lying on the cabin roof. He turned away, turned back.

"I'll give you ten bucks for them two pigs," he said almost under his breath.

Bill put the point of his picaroon against Kilby's pendulous abdomen.

Kilby backed hurriedly away. Bill laughed and stepped aboard the *Swallow*.

"Have you got a vindictive streak, Bill?" Gail asked as they moved out to anchorage. "I didn't think it."

"You feeling sorry for Mister Kilby?" Bill asked.

"Well, after all, they're his pigs," Gail answered thoughtfully. "And he does seem to want them badly."

"He can continue to have that same beautiful wanting," Bill declared.

In the night Bill snapped out of a sound sleep with a certitude of something amiss. Any man who lives on and by and for a boat develops an uncanny awareness of sounds, changes of trim. The clink of a piece of metal, the tap of a bit of floating driftwood against the hull, any movement on or around a drum-tight planking brings every faculty into play.

He eased out of his bunk, picked up a flashlight, moved quietly in bare feet to the companion hatch, slid back for air while they slept. He saw a dim figure through the wheelhouse windows. Con Kilby's pigs lay where Gail had put them. Bill pressed the switch on his flash once. That was enough. He grabbed an oar and struck.

He got in one glancing blow as the figure leaped and lit with a loud splash. The beam Bill cast showed a head, and arms threshing in a fast crawl. Mister Kilby made a fast getaway for so bulky a man.

Bill took the pigs inside, stowed them by the engine and went back to his bunk.

"What happened?" Gail's voice sounded in the dark cabin.

"Nothing," Bill muttered. "False alarm."

That was how he thought of Kilby, anyway.

HE TOLD Gail, though, as they trolled in the morning.

"He had a crust," Bill said. "To board me in the dark. He sure wants those pigs bad, doesn't he?"

Gail didn't comment. She stared away out to sea, knitting her brows.

"I'd give them back to him," she said after a while.

Bill snorted.

The *Silver Swallow* seemed to gravitate to schools of fish the next three days. The *Swallow's* boxes kept filling up. Bill nearly worked himself to death, hauling salmon, degutting them. It was joyful labor, bringing in big money.

"Lord," Bill said when he had been high boat by a wide margin for three days running, "I wonder if you brought all this luck with you? I've never had any such streak as the last three weeks."

"I seem to recall you protesting that I would be a nuisance," Gail reminded him.

"I still don't know who you are nor where you came from, and why you're here is still a mystery to me," Bill remarked. "I never knew a woman to pull a stunt like this before. You laid yourself wide open to—to all sorts of things."

"Which haven't happened," Gail said quietly. "I'm pretty well able to take care of myself. And it's really very simple. I wouldn't have been on the *Silver Swallow* only long enough to get off at Bull Harbor if you'd struck me as a—a messy sort of individual."

"Thanks," Bill said dryly, and let it go at that. Maybe women took whimsical notions like that without reason, and acted on them, but not in Bill's experience. Gail Martin seemed to have no motive except to live from day to day. But Bill remembered that trim two-master, with a man at the cross-trees watching through a telescope, and he still wondered fruitlessly.

The fourth afternoon they ran out of fish, went hours without a strike. Bill sat nodding in the cockpit, hard put to keep awake under a burning sun. Gail sat looking at Kilby's pigs by the mast. Bill stowed them beside the engine every night, but for lack of room set them on deck in the daytime.

Gail got a pencil and took one of the scarlet pigs. She began drawing lines on its blunt end. Bill smiled drowsily when he saw what she was doing—sketching in the outline of a pig's face.

"Have you any white paint, Bill?" she asked. "I can put real pigs' heads on these. Quaint, eh?"

Bill got her a can of white enamel and a brush. He sat in the cockpit again and struggled to keep awake. Three to four hours sleep and continual line-pulling takes it out of a man.

Gail stopped playing with Kilby's pigs.

"Bill," she said casually, "there's nothing doing and you're dead for sleep. Go and have a nap. I'll steer. I can pull the odd fish."

She could, as Bill knew. He let her take over. It was heaven to stretch on a bunk and close his eyes.

Gail let him sleep three hours. When he came on deck feeling like a million and suggested coffee she went below to make it.

Kilby's pigs rested on the wheelhouse top. The blunt fore ends were perfect pig heads in red and white. Ears, eyes, snouts. Everything but the grunt. Bill smiled at the realism of that job.

Then his eyes marked something on the deck. A mere detail, but Bill Steele had learned to note details. What he saw was a few cedar chips. Fine shavings. Funny. He hadn't done any woodwork for days. A little thing, but it stayed with him, puzzled him.

Bill had tools of various kinds in a

rack by the engine. He took a look. He knew their order, just as he knew which end of his toothbrush he always stood topside in the glass. A chisel, a screwdriver, a small plane. Someone had used all three.

"I must be getting batty," he thought irritably. "Trying to figure this out, as if the gal might have been boring a hole to sink the ship. Tusky, tusky!"

With coffee and some cinnamon toast Bill gave over trying to figure the answer. Gail had a deft way of making simple food appetizing. Afterward she went on top and made the wind-box croon while Bill steered for home with a crimson sunset blazing astern.

CHAPTER IV

DESTINY COURSE

THOSE northwest winds were periodic in August. Bill heard that weird moan in the spruce and hemlock that ringed Bull Harbor long before morning. Trollers slept in, glad of a rest.

Late in the forenoon Bill got up. Gail was visiting ashore. She did that now whenever they were in the harbor in daylight. Bill sat on deck with after-breakfast coffee, watching the combers race in Goletas Channel. Green horses with white manes tossing free.

He saw Gail on the fish scow, talking to Kilby. That had no license to affect him, but it did, unpleasantly. After a while Gail rowed Kilby out to his boat. She didn't go into the cabin. She sat on the after deck for awhile. Bill noted that. He couldn't help watching her. He didn't like himself for that, but he watched her sitting on Kilby's boat, with her feet dangling overside.

Then she rowed back to the *Swallow*. She had some fresh meat and vegetables. She was always buying food with her own money. Once her purse had flipped open and given Bill a glimpse of twenty-dollar bills in a thick flat green packet.

Bill couldn't make the woman out. He liked her, yet he often had a dubious feeling about her. She never talked about herself. She seemed to have no misgivings whatever about the unconventional situation in which she had deliberately placed herself. Maybe she was just a block of ice, Bill thought. Maybe it was *her* idea of a holiday, to get herself carried offshore and then make herself at home on the first troller that picked her up. But it seemed rather screwy to Bill Steele.

"Bill," she broke a long silence: "I wish you'd give Con Kilby back his pigs."

"Huh," Bill grunted.

"You don't need them. Why be petty?"

"Sister," Bill said patiently, "I told you what Kilby did to me not long before you turned up here. It was unintentional, my crowding him, and I told him so—but he turned to and ripped my gear off just the same. I was broke and it wasn't nice to have to get stuff on jawbone. So I keep his pigs to make him remember. If he bellyaches to me about those pigs again, I'm liable to give him something more to remember me by. I don't admire the kind of people Con Kilby is, and I could easily dislike anybody that does."

THAT gale held for forty-eight hours. It left a great slow swell heaving in from offshore. The fleet waited for daylight to cross Nawhitti Bar. There was no dangerous rip, but with that swell the Bar was dirty crossing in the dark.

With the first light the boats began to put out. Half a dozen got away ahead of Bill. He found the Kilby pigs in the way when he went to start his engine, and shoved them out on deck. He was getting a little tired of those pigs.

They lay by the mast just abaft the wheelhouse, where Bill steered, hands

on the spokes, as the *Swallow* headed into that heaving sea on the Bar.

Con Kilby was about a hundred yards behind him. The *Swallow* yawed and squirmed, lifted on great crests and dropped like a gull into deep hollows.

Bill glanced back when they were almost through the heaviest going. One red and white pig was floating astern. Gail Martin was just shoving the second one overside. Kilby's gray boat was forging up on the first pig, Kilby's slack-chinned mate leaning overside, pikepole poised like a spear.

Bill roared like a wounded lion. For a second he had a wild impulse to grab Gail Martin by her round, soft neck and heave her overboard after the pigs she had jettisoned.

He put his wheel hard over. The *Swallow* took a sea beam on and rolled guard-rail under. But Bill knew he couldn't do anything. Kilby had hooked up both pigs and gone surging by before Bill made half his turn. The gray boat stood on, Kilby waggling his fingers derisively.

If Bill's tongue was paralyzed, his hands were not. He glowered at Gail as he twisted the spoke, straightening up his boat. For a few minutes he steered, trollers passing him to port and starboard, for he was headed east now instead of west.

The tail of the fleet passed and left him in the clear. He looked at Gail. She crouched on the deck, on her knees by the rail, like a child caught in the jam pot. Plain scared. Bill didn't know that the look on his face was murderous.

He took a step aft, reached through the door. He caught Gail by one arm and shook her so that her head snapped. He was choking. His heart had swelled until it seemed about to burst through his ribs.

Then he grabbed his wheel again. The Bar was nasty. The *Silver Swallow* ran like a scared cat on the fore slant of two or three big ones, did a few dizzy rolls, and drove through into easier water. Bill stood on until he opened the long bight that was Bull Harbor. Then he set his engine dead slow and kicked out the clutch.

Gail's dinghy was lashed on the top deck. Bill cleared the lashings and got it overside.

"Pack your stuff," he said to Gail, "and get to hell off this boat!"

"Bill, I—"

"Your move. Make it snappy," he snarled.

Gail went below. She put her accordion in its case, packed the square black bag, set them on deck. She came up with the yellow slicker over her arm. Bill didn't offer to help her put the bags in the dinghy. He merely held the dinghy alongside with his toe. White rage burned in him like a living flame. When Gail opened her mouth to speak he made

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an impatient gesture. But she was not to be shushed.

"Bill," she said, "I know this looks like rank treachery, and I can't explain —now. I had to. I don't want to go back to Bull Harbor. Will you run me across to Shushartie Bay? It's important. Kilby gave me a hundred dollars to get him those pigs. I'll give you that hundred to run me across the Channel."

"I wouldn't take you to a dog fight," Bill said. "On your way."

But when she was in the dinghy, fumbling with the oars, looking up at Bill with a shine in her gray eyes that came from oozing tears, he said gruffly:

"Steve Collins'll run you across for ten bucks."

"You'll be sorry," she whispered, "bye and bye."

"I'm sorry now," Bill said as he gave the dinghy a push. "Sorry I ever laid eyes on a heel like you."

He put the wheel over and headed once more across Nawhitti Bar. He stood straight out to sea without once looking back. He felt sort of sick.

THIS blow seemed to have brought in fish. Bill saw trollers with poles spread, right off Mexicana Point. Bill ran out his gear. Almost immediately salmon began to strike. Mostly coho. They kept biting all day. Bill marched the seas till darkness shot down.

He was the last to unload at the scow that night and he went out to anchor without a word to anyone. The sight of Kilby's gray troller was an offence. He was glad Kilby wasn't on the scow.

Somehow the *Swallow's* cabin seemed hushed and lonely as he ate his supper. Bill cursed himself for a sappy fool.

"She was just a plain heel," he repeated.

But there were angles that bothered Bill Steele. He couldn't figure them and he couldn't help trying. He was glad when sleep at last closed his eyes. He turned out, woozy on his feet, when the alarm rang, careful to make no noise until he remembered that Gail Martin was not in that bunk. Then he cursed angrily, out loud.

Away offshore, drilling at his job, running on a line toward Cape Scott because there seemed to be fish that way, Bill marked a speck about ten o'clock which his glass told him was a boat rounding the Cape. She drove straight for him, passed with a rooster's tail of white spray shooting astern. Sixteen knots. *Reina del Mar*. Gray from stem to stern. Upper works all glossy varnish and polished brass. Blue ensign streaming from the jackstaff.

"Queen of the sea," Bill translated the euphonious name. "The government sports classy ships with the taxpayers' money. And all the brass-buttoned lads do is cruise around looking important."

He stared after her speculatively. From the cross-trees of her foremast a man with a telescope had watched him pick Gail Martin up—a job the government patrol should have attended to. The *Reina del Mar* had cruised past the fleet once or twice since, like a haughty lady taking a stroll. But she wasn't loafing now.

Bill stayed out till dusk. The sea was flat and the coho struck as if Bill's spoons were special tid-bits. Another big day. But Bill didn't get much of a glow out of it. He missed having hot coffee handed out to him, and that piano accordion breathing snappy swing tunes. That feeling of lack, of utter emptiness, angered Bill.

He forked off his catch in the white glare of the gasoline lanterns. Mel Adams stood by, beaming, cheerfully.

"You are sure goin' good, big shot," Mel said. "We hit 'em, too. Hear about Con Kilby?"

"No. Somebody else tangle with him?" Bill asked.

"He's got tangled in somethin'," Mel grinned. "The *Reina del Mar* swooped

down on him this afternoon, took Con aboard, took the Kilby packet in tow and breezed off up Goletas Channel."

"What for?" Bill wondered. "The *Reina's* got nothin' to do with the fishery service. She's a revenue boat."

"Nobody knows," Mel said. "She just gathered Con in and went her way."

A HEAVY cloud bank threw a black pall over Bull Harbor. Bill flicked his searchlight about as he picked his way to an anchorage. From Nick Harmon's forty-footer dangled a white dinghy that Bill recognized. Somebody turned a hand torch on him as he went by.

Somebody turned a light on him again as he let go his anchor. When Bill came back aft he heard oars clacking in rowlocks, coming toward the *Silver Swallow*.

Bill targeted his hand flash on that rowboat when it came alongside. Gail Martin shipped her oars and caught hold of his rail. The yellow slicker and the two black cases lay in the bottom of the dinghy, as if they had never been moved. Gail picked up her painter and clambered up without asking permission. Her small oval face looked rather set.

"Bill Steele," she said. "I've got something to say to you."

"It was all said yesterday morning," Bill answered stiffly.

"Not quite," Gail replied firmly. "Can we go down into the cabin? I have a lot to get off my chest."

Gail sat down on the bunk she had slept in for three weeks. Bill stood silent in the lamp glow, wishing she had kept away. He felt rather unhappy.

"The *Reina del Mar* took Con Kilby to Vancouver," Gail said. "Those pigs you took off him—they were hollow, and packed full of cocaine and heroin."

"Huh!" Bill gaped.

"Dope. Do you get the idea, Bill?" she went on earnestly. "Kilby was one link in a chain that stretched from the Orient to the Pacific coast ports. Remember the day I painted the pigs while you slept? Well, I'd been wanting a chance to investigate those pigs. Kilby was so keen on getting them back. So I used your tools to get into them and covered the joints with fresh paint. That's why I had to get those pigs back into Kilby's possession. We had to get him with the goods."

"We?" Bill echoed.

"I'm a government agent," Gail said. "Can you see the setup?"

"Sure."

Bill rubbed his chin. He knew now why the *Sirius* felt her way across that shoal. It made a definite location. And of course Kilby would know when she was due and be hanging around, a perfectly innocent troller about his lawful work. Nifty plan. No wonder Con boarded the *Swallow* in the night to get those pigs.

"You're being adrift was just a plant," he said slowly. "I wondered about that at first. I spotted the *Reina del Mar* away off that morning. They were watching you board me."

"Yes," Gail nodded. "They cast me off just as the fog began to thin and stood away off until they knew I'd been picked up. You see, we knew the stuff was leaking into Vancouver from up here. There's a packer from Bate Pass that took it off Kilby, I imagine. I'm not sure yet. We figured it came in on the *Sirius*, the *Canopus*, and the *Orion*. There are three tramps in that line. They call at Port Alice on the West Coast and then run up this way to load pulp at Ocean Falls. It would be easy for a trolling boat to make contact offshore. It's our business to stop leaks like that. I told you I had a job, Bill. I didn't like it much, but if you have a job you have to work at it."

"Yes, I guess so," Bill said. "You get promoted, I suppose, and Kilby gets ten years in the pen for smuggling dope. Well, that seems to be that."

"Is it?" she demanded sharply.

Gail stood up. She took Bill Steele by one arm and shook him—not as hard as Bill had shaken her, but she tried.

"You're just a plain sap," she said angrily. "Or I am."

Bill saw light then.

A LITTLE later, with the coffee water getting hot, Bill said to Gail Martin:

"Well, I'm darned glad you're sour on this government job. We ought to do all right trolling. Think it will be as much fun to go fishing with the guy you're married to as somebody you never saw before?"

"Lots more fun," Gail said, rubbing her face against Bill's shoulder.

She got up and poured two cups of coffee.

"Did you suspect Kilby?" Bill asked.

"Not definitely, at first," Gail told him. "Naturally I had my ears and eyes open for everybody. But even when I saw him hanging around that shoal which the *Sirius* crossed quite unnecessarily, I wasn't sure. I was going to get a message out to have him searched. Then, by sheer luck, you got in that mix-up with him off the kelp bed and tore his pigs off. His anxiety to get them back tipped his hand. After I tapped them, it was a cinch. Get them back to him and grab him with the goods."

"How did you let the *Reina* know? Oh, that was why you were so keen to get across to Shushartie yesterday."

"Yes. Collins took me over. There's a forestry boat there with wireless. We picked the *Reina* up off Quatsino on patrol. I gave her the low-down in code."

"If you'd just told me," Bill said regretfully.

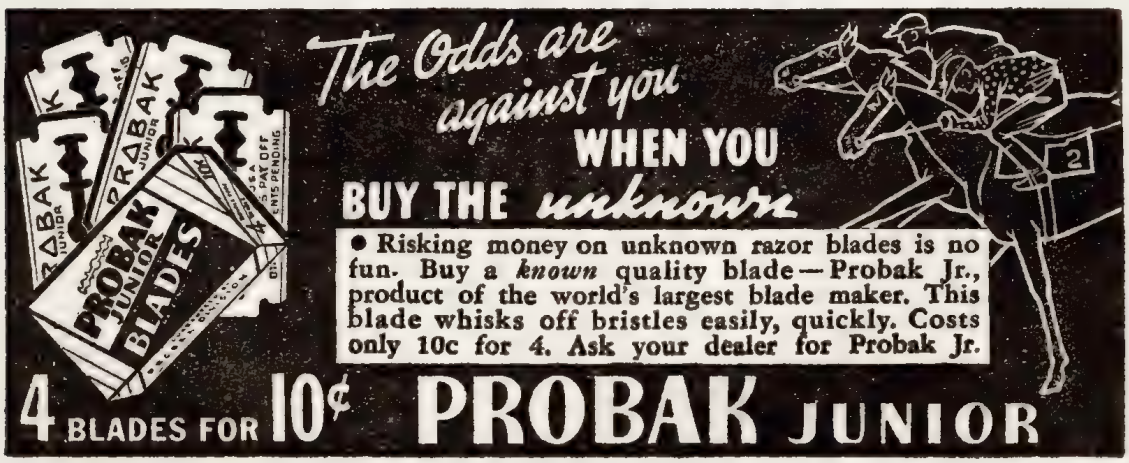
"I couldn't, Bill," she said. "In that business you just can't talk—to anybody. Once they'd got Kilby, then it was different. If I was staying on, I'd have to swear you to secrecy. As it is—

She laughed.

"You know, Bill," she went on, "you're a funny sort of lad. You're like lightning about some things and slow as molasses in January about others. When you took me aboard and carried on in that offhand way and still were nice to me I said to myself, 'Here's a fellow I could go for in a big way.' But you never gave me a break at all. Couldn't you tell I liked you a lot? You were awfully slow to warm up, William."

"Well," Bill confessed, "I have to be slow about starting anything that amounts to much, because it gripes me like blazes to start anything unless I mean to finish it up with all the *i*'s dotted and the *t*'s crossed."

"It's a good way to be," Gail nodded. "I'm like that myself."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TRADITIONS OF THE DEEPWATERMEN

by WINDAS

• RAISING THE WIND •

This term, used today as slang for raising money, harks back to when ship-masters would pay old Finnish witches to concoct a wind favorable to their ships on the voyage.

• AYE AYE, SIR! •

This affirmative nautical answer was originally "Yea Yea, Sir!" but generations of Cockney sailors with their odd accent pronounced it "Yi Yi, Sir!" until finally it assumed its present form.

• THREE SHEETS IN THE WIND •

Used in regard to anyone the worse for liquor, this slang-term had its origin in the behavior of a vessel going about on another tack. Inner-jib, outer-jib and stay-sail sheets are let fly, and she heads into the wind, reeling, pitching and staggering.

• LEATHER-NECK •

The early U. S. Marines got this nickname because, in order to keep the collars of their uniforms erect, stiff leather bands were sewn into them.

"A grand soldier to hold a position . . ."

THE SOUL OF A SOLDIER

By George Fielding Eliot and R. Ernest Dupuy

SECOND OF TWO PARTS

"I'VE heard," prodded the civilian, "some criticism of Italian accomplishments in the war."

"The Italians were good soldiers, as brave as any, "the major pronounced. "They had good generals, too: Cadorna and Diaz and Badoglio and Caviglia. I think their regimental officers were not quite as good as in some other armies, and they were fighting in a tremendously difficult terrain. Moreover, the Italian is an emotional fellow, far more so than a Frenchman. The Caporetto disaster was due as much to the effect of clever German propaganda as to their military superiority.

"A terrible business, Caporetto. A British officer who was present told me that he never saw a more sickening sight than the narrow passes leading down from Monte Maggiore—reserve units coming up, fresh and enthusiastic and determined, meeting masses of panic-stricken fugitives screaming, 'All is lost! The Germans are at our heels! Treachery! Treachery!'

"Firm ranks would break; the cry would be taken up by the new troops, run from lip to lip. Then in another second all would be fleeing in one wild panic flight, all military order and discipline lost, the one idea being to get away, while the officers were borne down and trampled under foot if they tried to check their men—To hear him, you'd've thought that cowardice was an Italian national trait. Yet, when the Germans had outrun their transport and had to check their pursuit, many of those same troops of the broken Italian II Army, given a breathing space, reformed, rearmed, reorganized and brought again under the familiar control of discipline and soldierly pride, turned and fought like heroes along the Piave, checked the renewed German and Austrian advance, even counter-attacked gallantly and successfully."

"I saw a bit of that propaganda stuff first hand"—the colonel stuck in his oar. "Fritz' planes tossed a bundle of it over our heads one morning in the Meuse-Argonne, the sheets fluttering down where our men ran after them. Handbills written in English, and good English at that. Very carefully done, but missing our psychological reactions by a mile. 'Never Say Die,' was the title on one, I remember. It was full of catch-phrases—references to 'those German soldier boys in their faded gray uniforms,' their 'spirit of live and let live,' how much better it was to live than to die, no matter how good the cause, and closing with an invitation to be 'free boarders in Germany till the war is over' —that sort of stuff.

"The fellow who wrote that had lived in the United States. Scattered about at home, it would not have been bad stuff. But not for us—not then. My men didn't want any of it. We'd been badly knocked about by artillery fire and felt we wanted a chance to do some knocking ourselves.

"At the same time the Germans were dropping another type of appeal to the French troops—I have some samples of these, too, in my scrapbook home—warning them against the Yankees and British, who were 'violating French women while their husbands and sweethearts were at the front.' "

Italian

"THAT propaganda stuff has become a real weapon," remarked the major. "I read a review of Marshall Di Bono's book the other day. The Italians learned the lessons of Caporetto, and they went one step further, according to him. He makes no bones about it, tells how before the Ethiopian trouble came to a head the Italians had established a network of agents out there who by word of mouth and money-buttering, worked on outlying chieftains to break down their loyalty to Haile Selassie. And, hanged if he doesn't make the bald statement that they estimate they either pulled away or neutralized 200,000 fighting men by those tactics before ever a shot was fired. How about that for working on the soul of the soldier?"

"Well," shrugged the colonel, "if you

ask me, the typewriter and the loudspeaker not only will be, but are at this present minute long-range artillery, bombarding the world in the interests of a dozen different causes, singing praises of this one, cementing relations for that one, rousing anger here, sympathy there."

"It's interesting, just the same, that radio business," broke in the civilian. "Listening to programs from all over the world, especially arranged for you—"

"Do you listen in on foreign short-wave stuff?" cut in the major.

"No. I mean the programs arranged over our own broadcasting stations."

"Do you know that France, Germany, England, Russia, Holland, Italy, broadcast news every day, several times a day from their government stations, in English—beamed for the U.S.? As well as talking in Spanish, for South American benefit, and in their own respective languages? That the Russians give long lectures on the beauties of communism and defects of capitalism, in English, French and Spanish; the Germans sing the praises of Hitler; the Italians rave about Mussolini—all in good English? That the Spanish government station in Madrid is going on nightly in such fashion you would never imagine the city to be besieged, and sending news reports in English? That from Tetuan and from two Portuguese stations come daily reports in English from the rebel side? That Czechoslovakia is now bombarding us, that a dozen other nations are broadcoasting specially for the U.S.? And get a load of this: German government short-wave stations call daily on individual Americans who have written to them—'Hello, Herr So-and-so, Number—So-and-so street, Chicago,' for instance, as I heard the other night—'We are so glad to hear from you. We are sorry that radio regulations forbid our answering some of your questions over the air, but we will write you.' They thank them for writing, they congratulate them on birthdays, they play special musical numbers for them, much in the same fashion as our stations used to do in the early days of radio."

"So what?" the civilian queried. "Don't you think that's creating international good will?"

"Sure it is, and that's a fine thing if it's on the level. As a matter of fact, our radio amateurs have been building up the finest sort of good will for many years. International chats between ardent enthusiasts with no axes to grind, building up personal friendships, understandings, are the best sort of things to prevent war.

"But in many of these same countries today radio amateurs are much restricted, forbidden to transmit in some. Instead of Bill to John conversations between individuals, we are getting propagandist pap from foreign government agencies—pap that may, when the right moment comes, create a canker in the American mind, cause American listeners to look on world events as the dictators of foreign countries wish them to look—not from an impartial viewpoint. Listeners who may be American soldiers some day. But that's enough of that. All I want to put over is that I agree with the colonel that propaganda is one of the weapons of the present as well as the future, and that it will play a part in affecting the soul of the soldier and that of his people at home."

"Let's see, we were talking of the Italians—or was it the Austrians?" murmured the civilian.

"I don't think the Austrians were so hot," the lieutenant put in, with somewhat less assurance than he had shown before.

"They weren't," the colonel barked. "Even the Serbs licked 'em before the Germans came down to help. But there again you have a funny problem. Here was a big empire made up of different, and mutually antagonistic races: German-Austrians and Hungarians, each

with millions of Slavs as underlings, and Slavs as different as the Czechs, the Poles and the Croats—what sort of army could you make out of a mélange like that?

"They lacked, of course, any common loyalty to hold 'em in line. Leadership was stalled by the adherence to old-time traditions, by refusal to allow Slavs to rise to any position of rank, by hidebound methods of military education. Their field training was probably the worst in Europe; they had antiquated and insufficient artillery for the most part, despite the excellence of some of the Skoda guns; plus language difficulty that was almost insuperable—why, they even insisted on giving the words of command in the regular Hungarian regiments in German, though in the Hungarian 'Honved' or Landwehr, Hungarian words of command were used.

German

"Racial and class jealousy was everywhere; and speaking of incomptent regimental officers who neglected their men and had no interest in their profession as such, I'll back the old Imperial-and-Royal Austro-Hungarian army against any in contemporary Europe. As for the Slavs, they deserted to the Russians by battalions whenever they got the chance. There was an army that had *no* soul!

"But remember that out of this mess came the Czechs—and when they were welded together as an entity they not only fought well for Russia against the best German troops, but when she collapsed fought their way through the Bolshies from the Urals to Vladivostock, and back again to Ekaterinburg. There was an anabasis for you!"

"As you pointed out just now, Colonel, when the Austrians ran up against the Serbs, who were damned fine fighting men fired by their recent victories against the Turks and Bulgars, they took it on the chin," observed the major. "Which brings us to Johnny Turk—an excellent soldier, bolstered by the idea that he who falls fighting against the infidel goes straight to Islam's particularly attractive paradise, but cursed by another idea to the effect that it is useless to battle against Fate and tomorrow is another day."

"Precisely," chuckled the colonel. "A grand soldier to hold a position with, good in attack too, but difficult to lead back into the breach after he's been once soundly repulsed. He thinks, 'Allah is not with us this day, brothers.' He'll take a lot of beating, though, if he gets just a taste of victory, or has a really inspiring leader of his own faith. And for fortitude and endurance under hardship Johnny Turk is one of the best. Well led, he's tops. He showed that at the Dardenelles and on the Sinai peninsula."

"AND now," said the civilian, as the colonel paused to reach for this glass, "we have left only the French and the Japs,

of the World War crowd."

"The French are good all-around soldiers," the major said. "General Harbord thinks that their general officers were probably the best high-ranking leaders the World War produced—cool, resourceful, well-grounded in the theory of war, practical in application of theory to battle conditions and able to hold the confidence of their subordinates. I think that it is largely due to the truly admirable French system of educating their officers from the junior ranks up; the corps of officers of the French army is by all means the most workmanlike, and professionally the best qualified of any European army.

"The men don't look like much. I'll never forget the shock I got the first time I saw a French infantry regiment on the march. They looked like a mob of gutter-bums, unshaven, dirty, straggling all over the road, without any apparent order or march discipline, packs and rifles carried in a dozen different fashions, transport mixed up with the troops—oh, a sorry mess. Or so I thought, having been brought up otherwise.

"But that same hairy poilu in action is a very fine soldier indeed. There's something about a conscript army in a republic that is truly democratic. The man in the ranks knows that he can be on the way up if he wants to; most of the French reserve officers are drawn from the ranks, and they maintain schools of application where noncoms can qualify for regular commissions, too. Nothing like that in pre-war Germany, or Austria-Hungary, or Czarist Russia. Not too much of it in Britain, though the colonel here will cite you Sir William Robertson as a notable exception. That's the point—he *was* a notable exception."

"What about the French mutinies in '17?" asked the colonel.

"There'd been too much backing and filling about the spring offensive that year, and they'd been asked to do too much," was the major's verdict. "Any soldier in the world may buck if he's handled like that. Every army has its tale of mutiny."

"Let me quote Du Picq again," suggested the colonel.

" 'Man does not enter battle to fight, but for victory. He does everything that he can to avoid the first and obtain the second. The continued improvement of all appliances of war has no other goal than the annihilation of the enemy. Absolute bravery, which does not refuse battle even on unequal terms, trusting only to God or to destiny, is not natural in man; it is the result of moral culture. It is infinitely rare, because in the face of danger the animal sense of self-preservation always gains the upper hand. Man calculates his chances.' "

"That may be the psychological explanation of the French debacle in '17," the major observed, "but my idea is that political interference had a great deal to do with that sad affair. The government plainly showed their lack of confidence in General Nivelle and his plans; in a republic such things can't be concealed, and the troops soon realized that the commander-in-chief had lost the confidence of the government. What more certain than that he should lose theirs too? They were down-hearted and discouraged before the attacks were launched; they were foredoomed to failure.

"Civilian interference is always a curse to a general in the field. If the French government had no confidence in Nivelle they should have replaced him, not harried him with interrogatories and tormented him into making bigger and better claims of what he could do. No wonder his men mutinied, after their failure and its attendant losses. But they came back again under Pétain and were going strong at the end of the war. Nothing basically wrong with 'em, you see."

"I raise a cheer for that crack about

civilian interference being a curse to a soldier," the colonel remarked. "I don't care how much military ability there may be in the head office, the man in the field must be given his job and let alone to do it the way he sees fit. You take Jefferson Davis, a graduate of West

French

Point, who commanded a regiment with distinction at Buena Vista and refused to let himself be carried off the field, though severely wounded, until victory was won. A great war president, you'd be sure. Yet in the Civil War, without exception, every attempt of his to interfere with the commanders in the field was a mistake. The soldiers knew it, too, and resented it.

"After he'd replaced Joe Johnston with Hill in the Atlanta campaign, with the result that all the effects of Johnston's masterly rear-guard actions were lost by Hill's reckless impetuosity, Davis came to cheer up the Army of the Tennessee by a personal appearance. As he drove down the line in his carriage, regiment after regiment greeted him with the cry: 'Give us back old Joe! We want old Joe!" Old Joe, who had done nothing but retreat, fiight, retreat again—the sort of stuff which is supposed to take the heart out of a soldier! Yet they knew it was the only way to hold Sherman. They knew Davis was wrong."

THE civilian sipped meditatively, started to make wet rings with his glass on the table top.

"Looks to me I've started something. And that being the case, I might as well go the whole hog, now that you fellows seem to have your hair down. What about the soul of the general? How is it we hear about generals being always wrong, that they don't accept new inventions until they're rammed down their throats? That the real strategists are civilians?"

"You've covered a wide field there, boy." The colonel tugged reflectively at his moustache. "And yet," he continued, "it affects the soul of the soldier, for if he hasn't confidence in his leader, down goes the old morale. But the fact that his men have confidence in him doesn't make the general a great soldier. Take McClellan—"Little Mac—" adored by the Army of the Potomac; a great organizer, yet missing the spark of genius in the field. He was hampered, of course, hog-tied by civilian meddling, from Lincoln down. Yet Grant broke through that civilian meddling by the sheer dogged will-power which McClellan lacked, though Grant was not adored.

"Sheridan, Stone-Wall Jackson are examples of first-rate leaders loved by their men. Then you have Custer, the beau-sabreur—but Custer, later on, by mistaken judgment, rode to death with his Seventh Cavalry."

"Now in the World War—but look here, we can't ramble on into a critique of all the commanders there. Better men than ourselves have been threshing it out for years. Read Captain Puleston's 'High Command in

the World War' if you want a good resumé of war leadership—there's a Navy file who knows his stuff."

"I've got to horn in on this, Colonel," the major broke in heatedly. "I think our friend has been reading a lot of the trash in popular magazines—things with high-sounding titles such as 'Stupidities of the Military,' and what-not. Ever hear of the story of the sea-captain who was up before an inspection board as result of a collision? They found him guilty of misjudgment, and suspended him.

"The old man got up. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'you've taken three months to investigate this collision and decide that I was wrong. I had thirty seconds on my bridge to make *my* decision. Thank you.'

"The answer, it seems to me, is that the military leader is as much affected by human frailty as any other professional man. Doctors, lawyers make mistakes—costly ones, too. But they survive their mistakes; the general who makes a major error is through. That's reasonable. His mistake has cost the blood of his men, maybe the cause of his country. But how many times have civilian politics and favoritism gone to the making of a general? To giving power to the 'elderly, heavy-sterned old men'—no offense, sir—that Kipling wrote of?"

"Quite right," agreed the colonel, "except that age doesn't always mean inferiority. Hindenburg and Foch were not young men. And it's true that like the medical profession, the military is inclined to look askance at new developments.

"They *should* be careful, too. One of the many reasons why France lost the war of '70-71 was the flighty notion that the mitrailleuse would take the place of the field gun.

"Then also, as British naval authorities stated before Parliament in a recent argument over the merits of airplanes and capital ships, they believed the capital ship was necessary. The advocates of the extreme air view, they stated, would wish England to build no capital ships, although other powers were still building them.

"If their theories were well founded, the committee remarked, England would have wasted money. If, on the other hand, these extremist theories were wrong, 'we would,' said the committee, 'in putting them to the test, have lost the Empire.'

"Lost the Empire! That is the only way to reason on such matters. If you must make mistakes, let 'em be on the right side of the ledger. Better lose money than lose your country."

"Now I'm going to take the offensive," rejoined the major. "Who recommended dispersion of forces in secondary theatres during the World War? Lloyd George and Churchill. Who insisted on the Dardanelles expedition? Churchill. Who urged the crazy plan—which was never carried out, fortunately—that Britain send nine divisions to Syria in 1917 to bring that fighting to a conclusion and then have them back home to take part in the spring offensive in France? Lloyd George.

"Think of *that* one for a minute. With the shipping available at the time, the last vessel carrying these divisions and all their gear would just be leaving Marseilles for Syria by the time the next spring offensive was due to start. There's civilian strategy for you.

"Mind, I'm not excusing the tactical blunders at the Dardanelles by some of those 'elderly, heavy-sterned' old generals; but that's another story. The fact remains that there should never have been a Dardanelles expedition in the first place—and the next blunder was that having decided on it, the element of surprise was surrendered. Both those blunders fall on civilian shoulders; the hands of British military men were tied by those two things."

THE lieutenant was all this time wriggling in his seat. As the major concluded he piped up.

"How many times has military preparedness in the United States been thwarted by well-meaning civilians? Men like the late William Jennings Bryan, who spoke fatuously of that mythical 'million men' who were to 'spring to arms overnight'? They believed what they advocated, of course, those civilians. But don't you think that sort of stuff affects the soul of the soldier? Is his spirit made any the higher if he knows his own politicians have throttled his training and that of his leaders?

"What hindered us on the sea in 1812? Thomas Jefferson's decision in 1807 to cancel the building of six ships of the line, to allow three perfectly good frigates to rot away, and to build instead two hundred fifty-seven coast-defense gunboats, not one of which ever played a part in defending our shores!

"And finally, who sent American soldiers to Archangel and Siberia to help pull rotten chestnuts out of the fire for our allies? I've never heard that American generals ever recommended either of those madcap expeditions."

He ceased as suddenly as he had spoken up, flushed at his temerity, but the others were nodding approval.

"Good stuff, youngster," commended the colonel. "You haven't forgotten your military history, I see. But don't you think we're going around like squirrels in a revolving cage? I don't think we've got to look further than Spain today for the best example of what makes up the soul of the soldier—just the very stuff that old Ardant du Picq was trying to put over. I mean leadership, discipline, training, as opposed to amateur enthusiasm."

"I don't get you, Colonel," the civilian rebutted. "It looks to me like the struggle of a patriotic nation against mercenaries and foreigners."

"It would," the colonel grinned. "Unless you knew Spain, her people and her military resources. Let's put it this way: Here you have a nation made up of a collection of ill-assorted provinces, most of which have no common ground, but pride and individual bravery. The Basques, the Catalonians, the Galicians, the Andalusians, just for instance—they each have their own aims, and they don't hesitate to fight for them. And

English

what they want is not what the men of Old and New Castile want. You can multiply this *ad infinitum*. Who was it said when this particular pot began to boil over: 'the time has not yet come for Spaniards to cease shooting each other'? President Azana. They are a nation of individualists, of violent personal opinion, purely local in their preferences.

"And, by the way, have you ever asked yourself, where are the Spanish people all this time? They are not fighting with Franco, and neither are they fighting with the loyalist government. Mull that over a bit. What we saw in the beginning was a fight to the finish

between two factions. And I say two factions, because you mustn't be misled by this propaganda stuff.

"Take the thing from the start; a series of outbreaks, culminating in the march of Franco's army halfway across Spain, from Seville to Madrid—not more than 40,000 men at most, with large detachments guarding the long line of communications. And what elements made up Franco's army? Spanish conscript troops in Morocco, Spanish conscript troops salvaged from Spanish garrisons, the Foreign Legion, and the Moorish *regulares,* with a sprinkling of civil guards. Of all these men the only mercenary element is the Moorish—Berbers enlisted in the Spanish Army. The Foreign Legion—and I know it; I've been with it—was ninety percent Spanish, quite different from the French Foreign Legion.

"Franco's little army was a cohesive, disciplined force, well led, well trained. It was opposed by enthusiastic, untrained amateurs, much superior in numbers. What happened? The invaders out-marched, out-maneuvered, out-fought their opponents until Madrid was reached. That's the example I'm speaking about—enthusiasm against training, professionals against amateurs."

"Then why didn't this snappy professional outfit just march right into Madrid and settle things?" The civilian was just a bit sarcastic.

The colonel stopped the major's eager response. "Let the kid tell him. He can if he's a soldier." He settled back to refill his pipe. The lieutenant flushed again, but spoke up.

"Because you can't maneuver in city streets. It's fighting in the open against men in houses, behind shelter. It means taking each individual house by hand-to-hand fighting, no chance to influence the action with artillery or proper tactics. It's like blind-folding a prize-fighter and expecting him to use his ring knowledge, timing, shifting, dodging, hitting the right place at the right time. It just can't be done. You've got to use brute strength, and Franco didn't have enough men for that. He could have thrown his whole force into Madrid and used them up without ever getting anywhere."

"That's the answer," broke in the major. "A soldier fears street fighting just as a sailing master fears a lee shore and for the same reason: he can't get sea-room to maneuver, to fight out the storm. And speaking of storming cities, what better example of the difficulties involved, and of the desperate bravery of the Spaniard can you find than the siege of Saragossa by the French in 1808-10?

"An epic, that story. Jose de Palifox y Melzi, a young Aragonian sub-lieutenant, placed himself at the head of the civilian patriotic movement and was proclaimed governor general by the populace of the city in 1808. Without money or regular troops he declared war against the French, who had over-run Catalonia and Navarre, and was promptly besieged by them. The antiquated fortress only held out for a few days, but it took the French a week to capture half the town. There was a lull. Reinforcements came in for the inhabitants, and after nine days more fighting the French withdrew. They had been trying altogether for sixty-one days.

"But Palifox got delusions of grandeur. He took the field with his ill-trained force against Napoleon himself and was promptly hurled back into the city. Napoleon besieged it again. For three months, from street to street, from house to house, the French regulars fought their way against the mob, people and priests, never giving up, giving no quarter and expecting none, until pestilence swept the crumbling ruins. Disease did what the French could not do with the bayonet, and Saragossa fell from sheer cessation of resistance. When you read in the papers of Spanish desperation today, think of Saragossa."

"And remember this, too," the colonel punctuated his remarks with his pipestem; "the delay before Madrid has given time for the government forces to learn about soldiering—to get military leaders, to obtain discipline, to work off some of that valor of ignorance. Both sides are being reinforced, of course, but time is working for the government,

Scotch Highlander

cutting down the odds that Franco originally had in training and discipline."

"I won't say you've convinced me," admitted the civilian, "but you have given me a different viewpoint on the Madrid fighting, and what went before it."

"And don't you ever think the Spaniard *isn't* brave, young fellow. I saw 'em in Cuba in '98. I was with Chaffee's brigade at El Caney." The colonel sighed. "There were five hundred odd Spaniards in that blockhouse, and Lawton's division was 4,500 strong. They held us up for nine hours, and when our brigade finally stormed it 320 Spaniards were lying in there killed or wounded, including General Vara del Rey, the commander, who was killed, together with his brother and two sons. About a hundred Spaniards got away to Santiago. Only a handful surrendered."

"DID somebody say something about Japs?" asked the lieutenant, in a tone that was almost wistful.

"Never saw Japs in action," the colonel growled. "I've seen 'em on parade, of course, in China. They look all right. Nothing gaudy about their get-up; all business. All the observers in the Russo-Jap war hand it to 'em for guts. Their frontal attacks on Port Arthur, for instance. Wave on wave, charging uphill over bare ground until they finally got into the Russian trenches. Stupid, of course, and a useless waste of life. They could have starved the Russians out."

"I never saw Japanese troops anywhere," the major admitted, "but I know a chap who was with our Navy in Shanghai in '32, and has also been a language officer in Japan. He's made a study of the Jap army and navy. He thinks the professional standard of the officers is only fair, their morale, however, very high. The men are even better than the Turks as regards fortitude and endurance, being especially trained to endure cold, hunger and exposure, and they will fight without any thought of ever giving up as long as one is left alive to pull a trigger.

"One place he thinks the Japs deficient is in the handling of technical equipment. The general standard of education is so poor that the Japs are going to have increasing difficulties as armies become more and more mechanized, requiring smart young fellows who can quickly learn the intricacies of tanks, complicated fire control devices, signal equipment, airplanes, and automatic weapons."

"Which is to say, the soul of the Japanese army is all right but its brains need a little brushing up," was the civil-

ian's unprofessional summary of this.

"That's it. Of course, you can take almost any clod-hopper and teach him one definite job by painstakingly keeping at it; but in handling modern weapons and equipment, you have to have men who are all-around experts in their line. Fellows who can make their own repairs, figure out for themselves what's wrong with their gadgets, take the place of the next man, if he becomes a casualty, without wasting half the day asking for help or instructions.

"You have, in other words, to have an army made up of little teams, each of which will keep on functioning as long as there is one man left in it; not a lot of monkeys who've had one particular mechanical task beaten into each of their thick heads but have collectively no idea at all of what it's all about. That's where my friend thinks the Japs will fall down—yes, and very likely the Russians too—and that's where we Yanks will shine if we have another war, which God forbid."

American

"You're right!" cried the volatile lieutenant, delightfully. "Why, every kid in this country knows something about radio, and automobiles, and airplanes, and engines and electricity—and guns—it's not hard to teach 'em more. They catch on right away. It's in their blood, that stuff!"

"Right," said the major, "and one reason is because so many families have radios and automobiles, and there are so many airplanes and tractors and things in the country. Kids that haven't such things at home can easily go to see 'em; they're all about. And then the magazines and newspapers, the correspondence courses, the radio talks, movies—our young folks keep up to date. More than the youngsters of almost any other country, except maybe Canada and Australia. In the warfare of the future, America is going to have a big edge."

"One of my instructors at the Point," observed the lieutenant, "said that he thought we were going to see what he called 'the renaissance of the professional soldier'—that is, the replacement of the conscript hordes of the past few wars with highly technical, mechanized armies. That means a different sort of soldier, I take it, from what we've been used to in the past."

"Your instructor," the major remarked, "hit the nail on the head. You can see the change coming even now. We don't take any more stumble-bums and bar-flies into the Army; we're getting a very high class of young man. Lots of 'em enlist just to get the technical training afforded by, say, the signal corps or the ordnance department. The majority have completed common school; I'd say off hand twenty-five percent of 'em have been to high school, and around ten percent have had at least some college education. The coming of the machine age has changed the character of armies, just as it has changed almost

every other phase of human activity. Mechanical warfare demands the best type of soldier the nation can offer."

"Mechanical warfare—bah!" said the colonel. "The Army's going to the dogs, or the grease-monkeys, which is worse. Thank God my fighting days are over. Why, they've even taken sabers away from the cavalry. A fine thing that, gentlemen!"

"We'll still be using the same set of principles that Hannibal did," the major remarked. "Surprise, concentration of effort, economy of force—all the good old principles, never changing, but with new applications and new twists. And behind them all will be the same soldier, the basis of everything, the human factor on which all the rest depends. We'll still need leaders who understand him and trust him, and whom he understands and trusts. We'll still need training, and discipline, perhaps more than ever, when so much more responsibility will rest on individuals and on small groups. It'll be the same Army, Colonel, with the same soul, and the gadgets won't matter as much as the men."

"That's all very interesting," complained the civilian, "but you still haven't told me who were the best soldiers in the World War!"

"Well," said the major, after an instant's pause, "if you're going to get right down to brass tacks, the fact of the matter is that the battalion I commanded in Flanders in the fall of '18 was undoubtedly the best doughboy outfit on the Western Front. They had everything. They—"

"Why, you—you unmitigated liar!" interrupted the colonel, rising to his feet and leaning over the table to shake his fist in the major's face. "My regiment, sir, in the Meuse-Argonne, advanced farther, captured more prisoners and more guns, and—Dammit, sir, on their worst day they were so far above that rag-tag and bobtail outfit that you miscalled infantry that—"

"Huh!" muttered the lieutenant in the civilian's ear, getting very red in the face, "I want to tell you that my father had a regiment that—"

"It's my turn to buy the drinks," said the civilian meekly.

But nobody heard him.

"This looks to me like Port de France jail —with luck!"

AN HOUR IN SHE-DEVIL BAY

By RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

BART SLOCUM plunked the rum bottle over the side and for a moment watched it sink slowly down into the invisible depths of the black-shadowed, silent bay. Then, clapping his sweating hands together, he laid hold of the oars and got the varnished dinghy under way again.

At every swing of his ponderous body he roared defiantly at the bay, "Whisky—Johnnie!" The boat leaped almost out of the water under the urge of the bending blades. The high narrow walls—for this Baie de la Diablesse was merely a deep split in one of Martinique's grim volcanic mountains—echoed back his words as if that she-devil for which the place was named was mocking him. One of those grim walls cut off all the direct light of the tropic sun.

"As creepy an' spooky a damn anchorage as I've ever laid in," Bart muttered. "Whisky—Johnnie!"

A few more strokes, a twist and widening of the riven mountain walls, and the glinting, sapphire Caribbean lay before him. Close ahead, moored by lines stretched to either side of the tiny deserted estuary, rode the schooner *Starlight*.

Bart, mate of this beautiful little ship, quit his roaring at the sight of her and ran a solicitous eye over her from bowsprit to transom.

"A healthy lookin' hooker, even here," Bart rasped in approval. He put the dinghy alongside without so much as grazing her ladder.

Next minute he was aboard and glowering at a gigantic leather-colored Martinican who squatted outside the cockpit. This man was sloppily pouring gasoline out of a can into the schooner's tank filler cap. There were five other cans of gasoline around him. Small pools of the fuel lay spilled on the deck and in the cockpit.

"D'you want to blow us up, you crazy lug?" Bart Slocum blazed at him. "I told you not to fool with that *essence* till I got here! My God, he hasn't got a funnel!"

The big Martinican had straightened up. He spread his hands sullenly and under his breath muttered something in French. His fingers emphasized the remark by sliding toward his knife. A tough mug, if ever Bart had seen one.

Growling, Bart pushed his left fist threateningly toward the man's stomach. Then, with surprising speed, he launched his oaken right fist in good earnest at the jaw that was thrusting out so menacingly. As when he rowed, Bart put his shoulders and back into it.

The Martinican took the blow squarely. Without so much as a stagger he toppled over, stiff as a falling tree. He crashed against the weatherboard of the open companionway and shot backward down the ladder into the cabin. The sound of another thump or two came up from below. Then silence.

"Huh! Can I hit!" Bart remarked in gratified surprise.

He waited just an instant for a counter-attack, then grabbed a cloth from a deck locker, dropped to his knees in the cockpit and began mopping up the gasoline. He worked fast but carefully, with a wary eye on the companionway.

Suddenly a head appeared in the opening. Bart knotted up his right.

"You know, sair, you have kill my mechanician Silvestre," the man in the companionway remarked calmly.

Bart stared at the gaunt rigid countenance regarding him so unwinkingly, like an impassive mask of evil. This was not the Martinican he had knocked down; it was M. Edmond Bertrin, sugar planter and for the past two days the charterer of *Starlight*. Almost white in race if not in hue, the gentlemen gave the insensitive Bart the same sort of creeps as did his black bay.

"Didn't know you were aboard, sir," Bart Slocum said curtly. "Send Silvestre up here and I'll kill him again."

Fretfully he swept sweat off his face with a swipe of his arm.

"He might ha' sent *Starlight* to hell an' gone," he grumbled. "A spark, a match, anything, an' we'd ha' been higher than Pelee."

M. Bertrin lifted himself a step in the ladder, revealing a huge, bony chest. His eyes, as velvety black as a Caribbean night, dwelt clingingly upon Bart's broad face.

"I mean it—that Silvestre is dead," he said softly, without emphasis.

"What!" Bart froze, then leaped for the companionway. Obligingly, even with grace, the bulky planter made room for him.

Silvestre was sprawled out on the floor of the cabin. There was a trickle of blood from a cut on his chin. Bart lifted his limp head; then bent lower beside the body and gazed blankly at the back of the skull. There wasn't much back; the bone was smashed in.

"I am afraid he had—what you call? —an eggshell skull," the sugar planter remarked in his dispassionate way. "Some men have. I did not see—I was just coming out of the stateroom—but I think, sair, his head struck that edge."

BART let the head down. He looked at the spot toward which Bertrin's thick-boned finger was pointing. There was a black hair or two, a little blood, on the sharp corner of the starboard bunk.

"God!" muttered Bart, pawing at the open collar of his shirt. "He *would* spring

a tissue paper conk on me!"

"I am truly sorry, my friend," remarked M. Bertrin casually. "The French law"—The edge of his hand made a rapid chopping movement against the back of his neck and he projected his tongue horribly from his mouth—"The French law is perhaps more fast than merciful."

"Don't I know? I was on the beach once in Guadeloupe, an'—"

Bertrin gripped him by the arm so suddenly that Bart started. The planter's flat face drew close to his. Momentarily it revealed animation, emotion.

"This man was no good, *un coquin!* I will help you!" Bertrin said. "But we must be most quick! And you"—His fingers tightened on Bart's arm— "You must tell no one! Not even Captain Redruth, your commander. You understan'?"

"How—"

"A big bag, such as you use for the sail, quick! And something heavy—ballast, anything!" Bertrin's voice had dropped to a whisper. "We are alone here. Only barren rocks overlook us. Quick!"

Blundering, dazed, acting as if in a nightmare, the mate was driven into motion by the black eyes of the planter. In the tiny forecastle he found the sailbag for *Starlight's* big mainsail.

Together they bundled Silvestre into it, well weighted down. Bertrin went up on deck. He looked up at the narrow walls of black volcanic rock, then motioned to Bart.

"Quick! Up—up!"

Together they heaved the bag up on deck.

"The water is deep here, too deep to drag," Bertrin panted. "And Silvestre came and went on the island as he pleased. No one will think—that he did not wander away."

Bart licked his lips. "Wait a minute!" he protested. "I got to think. I—"

Bertrin pushed suddenly. The bag dropped over the side with a splash into the bay of the she-devil. Its whiteness became more and more overlaid with green.

Bart looked up at Bertrin. The planter's face had gone dead again but his eyes, deep and black, were on Bart. "And this, his little box, we must sink that, too," Bertrin whispered. With strange care he lifted a cigar box from the cockpit bench. He carried it to the boarding ladder, descended a step and thrust it bodily under the surface. As it drifted downward the cover lifted and Bart had a momentary glimpse of a coil of wire and some cotton batting.

Bertrin straightened up.

"We will tow Silvestre's boat, in which he and I came here, to the landing place," he said briskly. "If anyone sees us, then we will say that I sent Silvestre ashore an hour ago to seek Captain Redruth, and that as we rowed up the bay we found Silvestre's boat adrift. No more than that. And if no one sees us, my friend, then we will tip up Silvestre's boat and still we will say that he went ashore for Captain Redruth. You understan'?"

"Sure," muttered Bart. "But—"

Again the strong fingers of the charterer of *Starlight* gripped his arm. "You understan' you have nothing to fear of me," Bertrin said. "I am *votre complice* —guilty with you, now."

"Sure. Thanks. Let's go," Bart muttered, pulling his arm away and reaching for the painter of the dinghy.

No voice hailed, no eye saw them as Bart rowed Edmond Bertrin toward his landing place on the black sand beach at the base of the narrowing, heightening walls of the cleft mountain. The sugar planter sat immovable in the sternsheets with his soft black eyes on Bart. It was he who tied up the clumsy boat in which Silvestre had carried the gas cans out to *Starlight*. Then he spoke curtly, as to an inferior: "My guests,

M. Louis Vidal and the Colonel Jules Bourget, nephew of the governor, will be here within an hour. I rely on you as well as Captain Redruth to make them most comfortable on board. I go now to confer with the captain."

His eyes slid significantly to Bart Slocum's face and away again. He turned and strode up the steep path that led inland. Soon he was hidden by the lush foliage—the damnedest green welter of ferns, tall grasses and clumps of bamboo that Bart had seen on either side of the equator.

SOMETHING rasped softly close to Bart's ear. He jumped sideways, with visions of a deadly *fer-de-lance* about to dart at him from the black wall. But it was no snake; it was just a match being scratched.

Bart Slocum darted a glance upward at a ledge twelve feet above his head in the volcanic rock. There, like a contemplative but lean Buddha, stood his skipper, Nick Redruth, just putting the blazing match to the bowl of his pipe. Bart himself had made that same climb to the top of the mountain spur the day before for a broad view of the clean and friendly sea.

The eyes of *Starlight's* master ignored his mate entirely; they were fixed in troubled thought upon that path up which the sugar planter had vanished.

"I thought you were up at Bertrin's plantation, sir," Bart muttered. "He's looking for you."

"Let him look," said Captain Redruth. "It's a big plantation."

"Huh! That's how I feel about that off-color gent and his she-devil bay, too," Bart said with emphasis. "Let's get the rags on her and haul tail out o' here."

For the first time Nick Redruth turned his attention to his mate. His eyes, ice blue, dug into Bart even deeper than had M. Bertrin's black ones. He scrambled down to his mate's level, spotless in white drill uniform in spite of his climb.

"You suggest that we abandon our little agreement with M. Bertrin to remain anchored here in Diablesse bay three days more while he entertains friends on board," Nick Redruth said slowly. "You wish to return to him two thousand of the easiest francs we'll ever get at a time when *Starlight* badly needs gear. Why?"

That last word, staccato as the crack of a whip, jolted the big mate more than Redruth's boring gaze.

"It's—uh—just I fell like you feel, sir," he said feebly. "Bertrin's yarn that he wants *Starlight* lying out there under charter to him so that this Louis Vidal that he owes the money to will think he's rolling in francs—it sounds like bilge to me."

He shook his head, surreptitiously scrutinizing the lean face of his master. "If Vidal really has got his hooks deep into Bertrin's plantation, throwin' a front won't give Bertrin the time he wants. Sir, there's something more than screwy about this"—He jerked a hand toward the rock-walled water —"this She-Devil Bay—something that means—"

His voice faded away under the merciless, accusing impact of Redruth's gaze.

"Come through, Bart," the master of *Starlight* commanded quietly. "What's happened?"

"Hell, I knew you'd get me," Bart muttered, almost with relief. Though he was an ex-beachcomber, a tropical tramp, there was between him and Nick Redruth a strong bond, the sweet little schooner *Starlight*, in which they defied a world that sought to master and condemn them to dull tasks along the merchant seaways.

"I'll need some brains before I'm clear o' Martinique," Bart blurted out. "I just killed that big chocolate Silvestre."

Redruth listened to the story of the

swift death and burial of the Martinican mechanic, tapping the side of his nose with a long forefinger, his face alive with acute attention.

"Come again about that little box," Captain Redruth said. "Bertrin handled it gently?"

"Like a baby," Bart declared.

"Most sporting of Bertrin, to risk execution as accessory to murder for you," Redruth commented dryly. "You must have an overwhelming charm that has escaped me, Bart."

"Lay off!" the big mate mumbled. "It's got me dizzy, too. But I did kill the guy."

"What makes you think so?" Starlight's captain asked. "Did you see him die?"

"No, but Bertrin—" Bart stopped, wrinkling his broad low forehead. "I saw the blood and the hair where Silvestre's head must ha' hit on the edge of the bunk."

"Did he fall straight back down the ladder—or sideways?"

Bart Slocum slapped his leg.

"By God, he was falling straight, headed right for the floor," he cried. "You mean—Bertrin? There was time. Bertrin could ha' caved in his skull if he'd wanted to. But why?"

Redruth jerked a hand toward the path that the plantation owner had taken. "We are dealing with a gentleman who is unique. Come on!"

AT A trot—no slow pace in that steamy atmosphere—he started up the trail. Through flaming green foliage of jungle thickness, under trees of uncounted species—balisier, mahogany, iron-wood, gommier, balata, all bound together by thick lianas—the path curved upward unendingly. Bart Slocum, panting, streaming sweat, thudded softly on beside his silent master.

His muttered questions went unanswered. The vegetation thinned perceptibly as they approached levels of cultivation on Bertrin's huge plantation. Breadfruit, banana and cacao appeared more frequently.

Abruptly, at a turn of the path. Redruth froze, stopping Slocum with a flick of his hand.

In sight ahead was Bertrin, halted to confront the biggest copper colored native the mate of *Starlight* had ever seen in the Caribbees. This man had two five gallon cans of gasoline tied together and slung casually over his shoulders on back and chest.

"That's Leon, Bertrin's own body servant," Redruth breathed.

"More gas, and Starlight's tanks are about full now," Bart Slocum panted. "Bertrin was no piker, giving us gas when he didn't intend to move her from her mooring."

Redruth grunted. He stood still, peering through the green branches. Bertrin was waving the man with the cans up the path ahead of him.

"Go after Bertrin, Bart," Redruth whispered rapidly. "Draw him away from that seven-footer and stop him at a bend in the path. Stall along until I creep nearer. Then tell him you know that Colonel Jules Bourget, the governor's nephew, is coming aboard with Vidal. Say you're scared and that you've decided to confess the killing of Silvestre to Bourget. The idea is that you're going to throw yourself on the mercy of the governor."

"The French governors ain't got no mercy," Bart objected. "Once—"

"Tell Bertrin just what I've told you!" Redruth commanded curtly. "Tell him, but watch your step."

"Aye, sir," Bart grumbled. "Only it ain't so."

Redruth shoved him ahead. Bart broke into a trot as Bertrin disappeared behind the green screen.

Treading softly, the mate timed his approach to a moment before Bertrin reached the first field of sugar cane. Then

he hailed him, not too loudly.

Bertrin stopped at once. His brows were raised questioningly above his black eyes, but no other readable expression showed on his solid heavy-boned face. He spoke sharply and Leon, too, halted, with a thump of gas cans.

"M'soo!" Bart panted. "I got to tell you something! Something private!"

Bertrin glanced around, across the waving green sugar cane to the graceful villa that was his home and headquarters.

Many men, singing and shouting cheerily, were at work in the fields but none but Leon were near. He motioned Bart into a small recess in the green lane.

"Well?" he said.

"I can't stand it!" Bart blurted out. "When this bird Bourget, the governor's nephew, gets here I'm going to open up to him about Silvestre! It was just an accident; the governor can't let them guillotine me for an accident!"

"Very well," said the planter calmly. He waved his hand politely, inviting Bart Slocum to precede him. "It is possible M. Bourget is already at the house."

Not knowing what to do next, Bart Slocum obeyed the gesture and started toward the house.

"Bart!"

The danger warning in that cry from Nick Redruth shocked Bart Slocum into a blind leap of terror. Something swished downward, inches behind his right ear.

After that first spontaneous start Bart Slocum whirled around. Bertrin was already raising a clubbed automatic for another blow at his skull. Behind him Nick Redruth was running swiftly.

"Why, you—" rasped Bart.

Bertrin, quick as a cat, was reversing his gun to get his finger on the trigger. He spat out a word to Leon.

Redruth launched himself in a desperate dive at the planter's back. Before Bertrin could fire, Redruth's shoulder hit the Martinican in the back of the knees. He went down hard.

A rumble from Leon's gas cans set Bart Slocum to pivoting. Before he could dodge, the huge Martinican, head down, butted him in the chest. If a car had hit him Bart could not have been flung backward more easily. He crackled into a bush and went completely through it.

Though Bart's chest felt as if it had caved in, the blow did not have the paralyzing, breath-halting effect of one further down in the solar plexus.

Grunting with pain, Bart scrambled up and tore around the bush, big fists swinging vengefully. Promply Leon charged again. One hand steadied the gas cans; the other stretched ahead of him with fingers widespread like a grapnel, to sink into his enemy's face.

Bart swerved sharply and thrust out a leg. Leon, pounding past, hooked one foot against that leg and clumsily thumped down on his face. Bart scrambled toward him. He caught up one of the five gallon cans and was about to dash it down on Leon's head when he remembered Silvestre's paper skull. His hesitation was slight, but Leon's big hand dragged a leg out from under him so suddenly that Bart's hands slipped on the can. The heavy tin dropped on Leon with devastating force. He went limp at once.

Shakily Bart stood up. Redruth had wrenched the gun away from the prostrate Bertrin and now knelt on the planter's chest, ready to club his skull with the weapon.

"You knew that dead-pan artist was going to slug me!" Bart panted, aggrieved. "This looks to me like Fort de France jail—with luck."

Nick Redruth shook his head reprovingly.

"I told you to stall along first," he said. "If you aren't big enough to take care of yourself, give me time to do it, will you? Watch Leon."

Most ungently Redruth, with the gun ready, began to search Bertrin's pockets.

The planter's eyes, full of black fire, stared up at him.

"You will both die for the murder of my man Silvestre," Bertrin declared in cold fury. "Both of you—nameless sea tramps and robbers!"

"Curse me softly," Redruth warned, with a meaning twitch of the gun. "I'm hunting for reasons, not francs, *m'sieur.* Somehow you don't make sense to me."

A moment later he was spreading out on the grass a few papers and letters from Bertrin's pockets. One note attracted him by its newness. He read it.

"French, huh?" Bart said, glancing over at it after assuring himself that Leon's skull was intact. "Mean anything?"

Redruth lifted his head sharply.

"Tie up that man somewhere well off the path," he instructed his mate. "Gag him. Do a seaman's job. It's important."

BART used most of Leon's clothes for bindings, but he made a work of art of his task before he was satisfied. When he crashed through the brush back to the path Redruth was still examining the note and tapping his nose.

"What's up, sir?" It was plain from Redruth's wrinkled brow that something was up.

"This is a line from someone, presumably someone at Bertrin's house," Redruth said. "With most profuse apologies, Bertrin is asked to leave his guests aboard *Starlight* for a few minutes while he returns to the house on a matter of great urgency that has just arisen."

"That's a queer one," Bart muttered. "His guests haven't showed yet. Sort of previous, ain't it?"

"It can only be a getaway letter," Redruth said slowly. "If one of Bertrin's servants brought him that note later today on *Starlight* he would have a perfect excuse to go ashore, while his guests remained on the schooner. While his guests remained on the schooner, Bart!"

Bertrin's eyes were fixed in black intensity upon Redruth's face. They seemed almost to project themselves forward in his head as he studied the owner of *Starlight.*

"Why should I not geev myself a little reason to leave my guests, if they linger overlong?" the planter said in a soft, reproachful voice. "You are a man of the world, Captain; you understan' these things."

Nick Redruth's nostrils were flaring with this growing and suppressed wrath.

"I am beginning to understand one thing, *monsieur,*" he said stiffly. "It is that the sooner we bring you back aboard the better it may be for *Starlight.* Stand him up, Bart! March him down the path. If he yells, crack him and carry him."

"Sure!" Bart Slocum was perplexed but most willing. He stood Bertrin on his legs and urged him down the path with a shove and a significant move of his big foot.

Slowly Bertrin started. His dark eyes, flicking over his shoulder, noted that Bart was now carrying the blue steel automatic ready in his hand. Behind them, also alert, strode Nick Redruth.

Bertrin spoke only once, quietly and with carefully chosen words, on that winding trip down to Diablesse Bay: "I assure you, Captain Redruth, that my attack on Slocum was to stop him from making a rash statement to the authorities, a statement, sair, that would have result' in the seizure of your ship and in the arrest of all of us."

"You will have every encouragement to talk when we reach *Starlight,*" Redruth promised grimly. "I hope, *monsieur,* that you will protect us both from the indignity of gagging you."

At the landing place Redruth motioned Bart Slocum to the forward rowing thwart; indicated the center seat to Bertrin.

Bertrin slipped into the boat, but remained standing. His face was again a still mask. "One more word, M'sieur Captain," he said. His quiet voice was shaking. "It is quite possible that if you take me out to the ship neither you nor I will return. On the other hand—"

"Thank you for that slip of the tongue," said Redruth. "You aid a man's attempts at reasoning most ably. Sit down!"

BERTRIN'S face showed a sudden tinge of color. He obeyed, lips taut. Redruth dropped into the sternsheets himself. All were silent as Bart, grunting, rowed down the narrow bay. The sinking afternoon sun, slanting across to the top of one rocky wall, left all else in deep shadows, black upon the surface of the water.

Redruth's blue eyes, looking past Bertrin's shoulder, dwelt upon *Starlight* with an intensity that seemed almost anguish to his sweating mate.

It was Bertrin, following Captain Redruth onto the deck of the schooner, who broke the silence.

"I fear my distinguished guests will take it mos' amiss that I am not at my house to greet them," he said lightly.

"Your guests will recover from that shock," Redruth replied in curt tones. He gestured to Bart to stand by and pushed M. Bertrin to a seat on the cockpit bench. Then he descended to the cabin.

Bart, turning a curious eye after him, saw him stop the ship's clock and stand still, head cocked, listening. His face betrayed a strange, utter concentration. Listening!

After several minutes he started the clock again, slowly climbed the ladder and faced Bertrin with stern directness.

"I am no fool, Bertin," he said. "This charter was most unusual. But what has happened in the last hour reveals your game completely."

"My game?" murmured Bertrin. "I wish merely to impress M. Vidal with my financial stability and to entertain him to win his good will."

"You wish to kill him," Redruth stated coldly. "With the big demand for rum and the price of sugar and cocoa shooting up all you need to pull your place out of debt is a little time. And while Vidal's executors were fumbling about with legalities you would have that time."

"I deny this!" Bertrin cried most indignantly.

"I think what gave you your idea was probably that motor launch that blew up in Fort de France bay two weeks ago and killed two men," Redruth said. "What happened once could happen again. And if so prominent a man as the governor's nephew was also killed it would make Vidal's death seem less suspicious, less opportune for you. What did another life more or less mean to you, since Slocum and I were also to die?"

"Why, the dirty, murdering—" Bart muttered.

Redruth nodded slowly. "So, with much fuss, M. Bertrin, you arrange to fill our tanks. You send Silvestre, your notoriously unreliable mechanic, to do the job. But you come, too."

Starlight's master leaned forward, his ice blue eyes challenging Bertrin's deep black eyes. "What was in that little box you handled so carefully and sank so deeply after you had seized your chance to rid yourself of your accomplice Silvestre—the dangerous spot in your plan?" he asked.

He gripped Bertrin's shoulder with a powerful hand. "Did it hold a few spare dynamite caps—fulminate of mercury? You need only one, properly wired, to explode a bottle of nitro-glycerine or a few sticks of dynamite in the bilge of the schooner, under the table. That would kill all and sink the ship, with flaming tanks, into water too deep for a diver

to investigate. A perfect accident!"

Bart Slocum brushed sweat off his face with a shaking hand.

"So that's why he wrote that note telling himself to leave the ship!" he muttered. "That was what tipped his hand to you, huh, Cap'n?"

Bertrin showed his teeth in a grin at Redruth.

"If you think that, why not raise the bottom boards and look into your bilges," he suggested softly.

Redruth shook his head.

"There is still a question to answer," he said. "How was that charge of explosive to be detonated after you had left your guests and gone ashore? I hear no clockwork ticking, and clockwork is not a clever enough device to suit a man like you. Doubtless you have contrived some ingenious booby trap—perhaps even the raising a floor board would do it."

Bart Slocum, on his knees in the cockpit beside the motor hatch, lifted his big head. His face was grey.

"The battery's been taken, Cap'n," he croaked. "You've guessed it! They've got the battery hooked up to some damn thing down in the cabin."

Again Bertrin's strained snarl revealed his teeth.

"I don't question your ingenuity, *monsieur,*" Redruth said. "But I intend to save my schooner. Right now you are sufficiently furious to blow us all to hell. But you will cool off after you have had a little time to contemplate that kind of death."

"I admit nothing, Captain," the swart planter replied in his soft voice. "But perhaps it will prove that my nerve is better than your own. We will see."

He sat back, with an air of ease. His black eyes were full of challenging calculation.

"Ain't we goin' to do anything?" muttered Bart Slocum aghast. "Are we just goin' to sit here waiting? How can we be dead sure it ain't some timing stunt?"

" 'Dead sure!' " repeated Bertrin with relish. "Most amusing—that! You will be sure when you are dead."

Redruth stood up.

"There is a chance that you might escape with your life on deck," he said gently. "Kindly come below with me, *monsieur.*"

Bertrin arose at once. But Bart Slocum gripped him roughly, restraining his move toward the companionway.

"No!" he protested. "How do we know he won't spring his trick if we let him get to the cabin? He's crazy enough to do it, too."

"Release him!" Redruth commanded icily. Without a backward look he descended the ladder.

Most reluctantly Bart Slocum let go his grinning prisoner. With his eyes never leaving Bertrin, he followed the planter down into the cabin. Redruth picked out a seat for Bertrin on the port bunk and sat down opposite him.

"This is a matter between M. Bertrin and myself, Bart," Redruth said. "There is no reason why you shouldn't go ashore."

Bart Slocum shot out his lower jaw.

"I'm standin' by," he muttered "Who's mate o' this hooker?"

Redruth nodded.

"Watch him, Bart," he said earnestly.

The ship's clock ticked, and every tick became a horrible and distinct sound in the silent cabin. Redruth, with no pretense of equanimity, sat motionless. His intent eyes were studying every fitting and furnishing of the cabin.

The books in the rack behind the port bunk, the navigating instruments to starboard, the lighting fixtures, the folded charts held in light lashings on the curving cabin top, the cushions, the mattresses, the lockers beneath the bunks, the stateroom door, the galley and the passage forward to the little forecastle, all occupied him. And at intervals, quickly, his eyes leaped back to scan the expression on Bertrin's face.

BART SLOCUM sat on the edge of the starboard bunk opposite Bertrin, resting his elbows on his knees as he leaned forward to stare at the planter. Occasionally he shifted the weight of his thick body from one elbow to the other but always his feet were firmly set for a quick leap. Meaningly he fingered Bertrin's gun, in the pocket of his damp, wrinkled jacket. From his broad, leathery face drops of sweat grew, trickled and ran off onto the floor like rain down a windowpane.

Bertrin's snarling defiance became too much for his twisted muscles. He closed his mouth, folded his arms and sat back against a cushion. His tongue licked his lips briefly. For only five minutes was he able to resist the temptation to follow Redruth's eyes. Then his gaze took in Redruth's unending scrutiny of the cabin.

Bertrin spoke. "Rather foolish, this," he said and stopped as his voice sounded strained, unnatural, even in his own ears. Neither man answered.

Time passed. At last, quietly, Redruth stirred. Deliberately and thoughtfully he began to move things about, first a cushion, then the leather case of his sextant.

Bart gulped air. Any one of those things might be the trigger that would blow them over the rim of this world.

Redruth's experimenting hands drew Bertrin's eyes to them; again the planter licked his lips. Little beads of perspiration bedewed his dark forehead. The cabin grew grayer imperceptibly as the sun dragged slowly downward.

Redruth's fingers were never still, now. They flickered from object to object.

Bart Slocum kept sucking in his breath noisily. He shook his head like a fly-tormented bull. Bertrin's eyes seemed to Bart to be sinking, with reddening rims, deeper into his head under the tension of the unending ordeal.

Suddenly Bart Slocum twisted his head. To his ears came the thump and rattle of oars, briskly plied. At Redruth's nod he stood up and looked out the companionway.

"Bertrin's friends," Bart reported.

"They will make good witnesses, unless M. Bertrin is still resolved to blow up them and us," the master of Starlight said quietly. "Sit down, Bart."

Bertrin swallowed, moved his lips but did not speak. The oarlocks of the approaching boat continued to rattle, more and more loudly. Redruth's hands lay quiet on his lap. He was listening.

The boat bumped alongside, with little regard for the paint on *Starlight's* gleaming topsides.

"*Hola!*" a voice hailed.

"Tell them to come aboard, Bart," Redruth commanded. He stood up. "I'll talk to them. We'd better have some light—"

In a most natural gesture his right hand stretched out toward the small electric bulb on the stateroom bulkhead. His fingers closed on the chain.

"Stop!" shrieked Bertrin. He was on his feet in a bound. His fingers clawed at Bart Slocum's bulk and pulled him backward off the ladder. Next instant he was scrambling up to the deck.

Redruth's fingers had not needed that warning. Eyes on Bertrin, he had merely touched the chain.

Though he could not equal the pace set by the panic-stricken planter, Redruth shot past the tottering Bart and leaped up the companionway a scant second behind him.

Bertrin's blind rush carried him to the rail. Suddenly he glared down into the wrinkled, astonished face of a man on the boarding ladder, peering up at him, and his fear gave way to fury.

"*Bo'jour*, Vidal!" Bertrin shrieked at him in horrible mockery. He flung himself feet first down on the man below. His shoes struck Vidal's face. The frenzied attack carried both men into the

water. They disappeared, driven deep under by the force of Bertrin's jump.

Colonel Bourget, standing in the sternsheets of the boat, lost his balance and plunged in after them.

Redruth ran to the ladder and laid hold of the governor's nephew as he struggled frantically, clawing at the schooner's smooth side. He pulled him aboard. Bart came plunging up the companionway.

"Bertrin dragged Vidal under!" Redruth cried. "Stand by with a line!"

He went over side in a vertical dive that sent him knifing deep into the water.

A long minute dragged by. Bart, cursing vigorously, ran along the deck, watching both sides of the schooner with a light line in his hands. The color was completely out of the bay, now; the water was black and opaque under the almost horizontal rays of the sun.

Redruth shot up out of the water. On his face were three bleeding scratches where long fingernails had raked a path. He gasped in air and dived deeply again.

"Let them go!" Bart moaned. "Come up!"

Again time stood still, while Bart raged up and down the deck. Once he stopped to grab the voluble, frightened nephew of the governor as he started down into the cabin. He flung him down on the deck. Interminably he searched the water.

A head broke the surface—Redruth's spent countenance. Bart Slocum had his line snaking out to his master before Redruth was able to raise up out of the sea the limp, wrinkled face of Vidal.

A few seconds later Bart was hauling them both aboard.

Bertrin—wasn't coming—up," Redruth gasped. "Not even—when—I got Vidal—away from him."

"Fair enough," Bart growled. "But how about this blasted dynamite?"

Redruth smiled, eyes wandering up the tall straight spar that was *Starlight's* mainmast. It seemed to stretch up, high above the walls of the Baie de la Diablesse. He nodded reassuringly to the mate.

WITH reverent care agents of the police removed from the starboard locker enough dynamite to blast into fragments a much larger ship than *Starlight*. They did this after Captain Redruth had disconnected the electric circuit that ran to the light socket on the schooner's bulkhead.

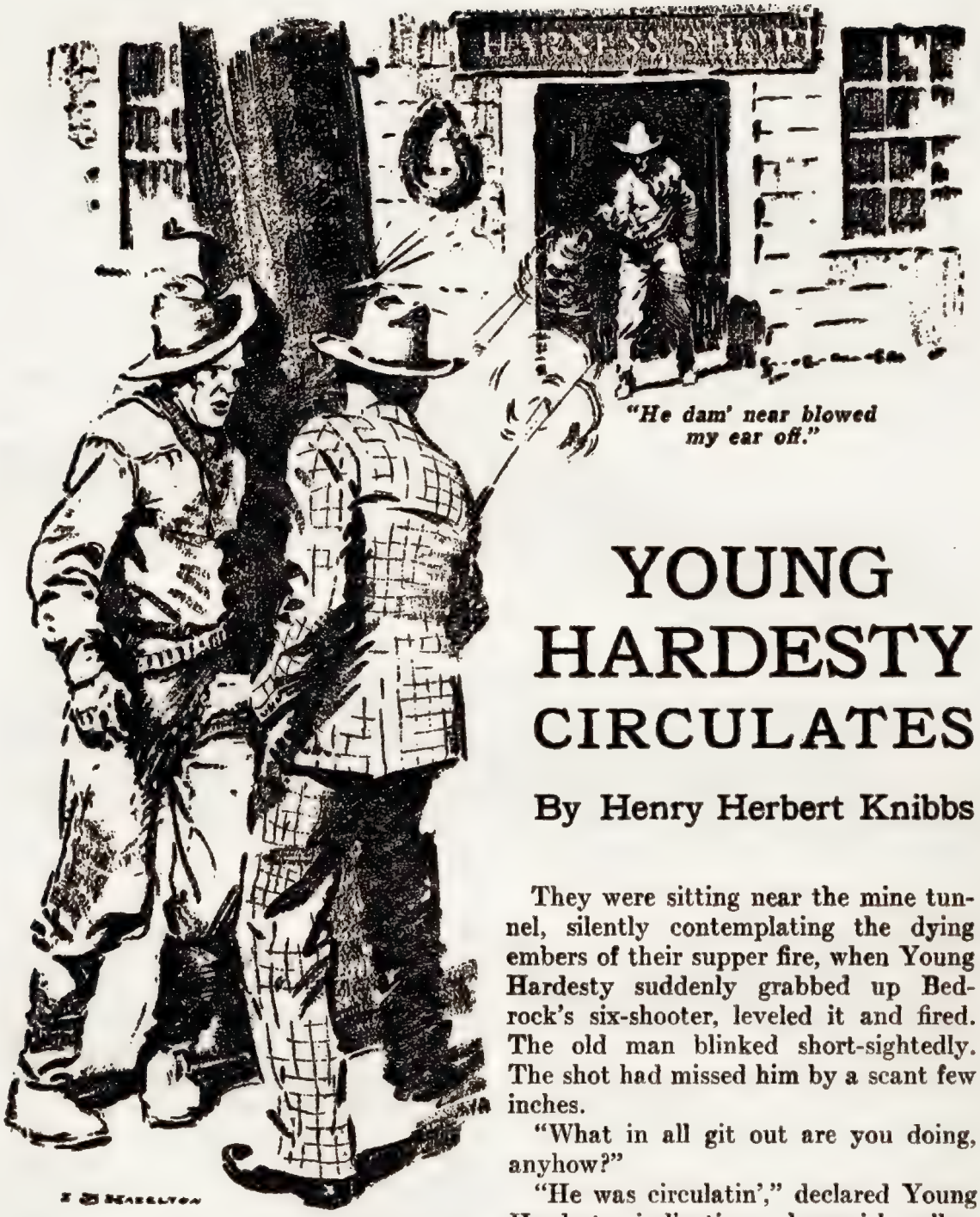
"He'd probably ha' blown us all up willingly enough, but he couldn't stand for you pulling it by accident, huh," Bart said in the privacy of the fore deck. "Funny, ain't it? How'd you guess the electric hook-up?"

"Bertrin's eyes, watching my hands, told me when I was getting close to the exploding device," Redruth said. "He could keep his dead face unreadable enough, but not his eyes."

He coughed. "Since Colonel Bourget, the governor's nephew, thinks so highly of us, you needn't implicate matters by knowing anything at all about Silvestre, Bart."

The mate of *Starlight* nodded, with a brief glance overside.

"I don't know anything except that the she-devil o' this bay has got herself a he-devil," he said. "They'll make a swell match—but I'm all for dodging the ceremony with every rag set an' drawing that'll hold wind."



"He dam' near blowed my ear off."

YOUNG HARDESTY CIRCULATES

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

ADOPTED by the old prospector, Bedrock, Young Joe Hardesty had lived for several years at the Mebbyso mine. For most of those years Young Hardesty had been pretty well satisfied with his lot. But during the past few weeks he had become restless. It was evident that the boy needed a change, needed to circulate among folks and smooth his fur down. Bedrock had told Young Hardesty so that evening.

They were sitting near the mine tunnel, silently contemplating the dying embers of their supper fire, when Young Hardesty suddenly grabbed up Bedrock's six-shooter, leveled it and fired. The old man blinked short-sightedly. The shot had missed him by a scant few inches.

"What in all git out are you doing, anyhow?"

"He was circulatin'," declared Young Hardesty, indicating a brownish yellow mountain rattler which lay writhing about a yard from where Bedrock sat.

"And he gets shot for tangling with the wrong folks," said Bedrock, rising and shaking out the bed blankets.

"Mebby he was the wrong folks."

The old man chuckled. "Tell you what, son. If the Lord is willing and the burro ain't lame, we'll light a shuck for Bowdry tomorrow morning. We're about due to go in, and we're getting a

leetle short of satisfyin' grub."

"And short of cash," said Young Hardesty disgustedly. "I reckon this dam' old mine is peterin' out."

"Mebbyso is her name, and she's Mebbyso by nature. Heave that rattler over the edge of the dump. I don't want any of his relations coming to his funeral."

Early next morning they set out, Bedrock, as usual, traveling on foot with the burro, Young Hardesty riding his pony Shingles.

Slowly old landmarks slipped behind them: Point of Rocks, The Pinnacles, and finally the water hole at which they nooned and rested. As their shadows lengthened in the afternoon sun Young Hardesty grew tired of holding the pony to Bedrock's slow pace.

"This here pony is fightin' his head to git movin'," he complained.

"Toss up a dollar," said Bedrock, smiling to himself. "Heads we keep on suffering together. Tails, you turn loose and fog into town."

Young Hardesty won the toss, gave a whoop and dug his heels into his pony's ribs. Far behind, Bedrock plodded slowly along. He would arrive in Bowdry sometime during the evening. The old man nodded as he watched him go. At sixteen Bedrock had felt just as frisky and independent.

Riding into town, Young Hardesty put his pony in the livery. Now that he had arrived, he didn't know what to do with himself, so he stalked to the street and stood leaning against a convenient telegraph pole, his gaze on some tired cow ponies drowsing at the saloon hitch-rail.

A minute or so later a trimly dressed man, with a black moustache and a wide-awake eye, came along Young Hardesty's side of the street. It was Jake Bowen, who ran the only gambling place in Bowdry.

Across the street a tall man stepped from the harness shop doorway. Instantly Bowen pulled his gun and fired at him. The man across the street replied. Young Hardesty hugged the telegraph pole as the slugs plunked into it. In five seconds the battle was over. Young Hardesty peered round the pole. The man across the street had disappeared. Bowen reloaded his gun as he walked up the street toward his gambling establishment.

"If it hadn't been for this here pole," reflected Young Hardesty, "that card man wouldn't 'a' got off so easy. He was standin' so close to me he dam' near blowed my ear off."

Wondering what had started the ruckus, and why the folks in town didn't seem especially interested in the gun fight, Young Hardesty stepped over to the Chink's place and ordered supper. Queer, too that no peace officer had appeared. But Young Hardesty was hungry. He soon dismissed the gun battle from his mind. Gun battles were nothing new to him. As a small boy he had swept out saloons in Bowdry.

HAVING eaten all he could, Young Hardesty strolled over to the livery to see if Bedrock had shown up. On his way through the stable to the corral, where Bedrock usually kept the burro when in town, Young Hardesty noted that the handsome bay thoroughbred belonging to the card man Bowen, was not in its stall. He asked the night man if Bowen was taking a little pasear. Fetching his lantern, the night man stood staring at the empty stall. "Funny, I didn't see Bowen come in."

A search revealed that the horse was gone from the stable.

The telephone informed the night man that Mr. Bowen was at his establishment.

The bay thoroughbred had been stolen.

The news spread. Townsfolk gathered at the livery. Presently Bowen appeared, interviewed the night man,

cursed him for a fool, and offered five hundred dollars to the man who would recapture the stolen horse. The Texan he had shot at was the culprit, he swore.

It was a big reward. Young Hardesty was surprised that those present showed no enthusiasm. After making the offer Mr. Bowen returned to his establishment.

"Why don't the sheriff get busy?" said Young Hardesty.

"Because," said one of the group at the livery, "him and Bowen don't get along. The sheriff would see Bowen in hell before he'd send out a posse."

To Young Hardesty, who knew very little about the gambler, this seemed decidedly unjust. But he didn't intend to mix into town politics by asking further questions.

When Bedrock finally arrived, Young Hardesty accompanied him to the Chink's place, where the old man had supper. Young Hardesty sat chewing a toothpick and thinking about the five hundred dollars reward.

"Just how long did you figure to stay in town?" he asked Bedrock.

"As long as you like, son. This here is a vacation."

"I'm gettin' kind of tired of hangin' around Bowdry."

"Already? And you been here all of three hours."

"Bowen is payin' five hundred dollars to the fella that gets his horse back."

"Mebbyso. But I wouldn't touch a cent of Bowen's money. Besides, chasing horse thieves is a poor game. It usually means killing. It's the sheriff's business to trail the horse thief."

"Bill Hathaway says the sheriff won't turn a wheel. Seems him and Bowen don't get along." Young Hardesty's eyes were bright, his face flushed. "We're short of cash. We got to get a stock of grub. Now, mebby—"

"But that don't mean that either of us got to chase horse thieves so we can eat. My credit ain't wore out yet."

"Anyhow, I'm goin' after that horse."

"You're going! Son, I don't ride you hard when you're ornery. You're sixteen, gettin' to be almost a growed man. I don't go around peddling advice wholesale. But you're my pardner. What say if we forget about Bowen and his horse and kind of circulate around town? Mebbyso we can scare up a little fun."

"Honkatonks, wimmen and card playin'!" snorted Young Hardesty. "That's all a fella can do here. And you don't drink liquor."

"I was figurin' mebby tomorrow morning we could prowl around and buy you a new hat, and some cartridges for your Sharp's, and mebby a new pair of overalls. You need 'em. Then for a couple of days we could eat our meals without having to cook them, and kind of live high for a spell."

Bedrock's persuasion had no effect. Young Hardesty's ears were laid back. He had his teeth in an idea and he wouldn't let go. He argued that he knew the country better than anyone in Bowdry except Bedrock himself, that he had a good horse, his rifle, and enough money to buy provisions for a few days. Moreover, they were taking a vacation. They might as well make something out of it. He didn't know what else he needed.

"If you're set to go," said Bedrock finally, "I can't stop you. Look's like you had it all figured out. But there's one thing which kind of bothers me. How are you going to track the horse thief in the dark?"

"Can't. But I'm bettin' he didn't head north."

"'Long about sundown," said Bedrock slowly, "as I was crossing the flats south of town, I seen a fella on a fast mount. The minute he catched sight of me he angled off a mite. But he was aiming for Point of Rocks. It was too far fer me to see what kind of a horse he was riding. Mebby it was Bowen's thoroughbred. I dunno. Only be a mite

careful, son," the old prospector warned.

YOUNG HARDESTY left town quietly, his first objective the shattered pinnacle called Point of Rocks, which now showed dimly in the desert starlight. There was a water hole there. It was the first natural stop anyone riding south would make.

Young Hardesty's enthusiasm cooled slightly as he rode down the silent, empty desert, alone, and with no certainty that he was on the trail of Bowen's horse. Daylight would determine that, one way or the other. He knew in a general way, what the horse thief looked like—a tall, big man, dressed like a cow hand, and wearing a sombrero that somehow suggested Texas. The stolen horse was a big bay with black points and a white blaze on his forehead. He was shod with light shoes and had a long stride. At a gallop, the distance between his tracks would be almost twice that of a cow pony's lope. It shouldn't be hard to trail him.

Dawn was breaking when Young Hardesty arrived at the Point of Rocks water hole. He discovered the short ends of two brown paper cigarettes, and fresh horse tracks. After a brief rest he again took up the trail, following the tracks south along the range. Eventually they would pass the Mebbyso mine. If they did keep on past the mine, Young Hardesty contemplated riding over the range and down Pipes Cañon. By taking this short cut he might be able to head off the horse thief, who would be less apt to suspect a man approaching him than one coming upon him from behind.

It took Young Hardesty till noon to reach the Mebbyso, where he saw that the tracks had gone on past, still heading south. After a brief look around Young Hardesty put his horse up the slope back of the mine. When he struck into the ridge trail he felt at home. He was in his own country, knew it well from there to Pipes Cañon and on down to the border. Still not quite certain as to whether the tracks he had been following were those of Bowen's thoroughbred, Young Hardesty kept on down the ridge until, at about three that afternoon he arrived at the head of Pipes Cañon.

His best bet was to make fast time down the trail; where the cañon broke down into the desert, he could wait and watch for the horse thief.

A glance into the cañon cut Young Hardesty's immediate planning short. A thin web of smoke was rising from Bedrock's old cabin below, abandoned since the discovery of the Mebbyso mine. The cabin was seldom used, but there was a supply of grub cached there. It wasn't cold enough for a fire. Someone was cooking something.

The old corral was empty. There wasn't a horse in sight anywhere. Perhaps the man in the cabin was some prospector, bushing there for a spell. Young Hardesty decided to investigate.

Cautiously he rode down the trail. Dismounting at the edge of the clearing, he tied his horse in the brush. From the cabin came the sound of occasional footsteps and the clatter of metal. Evidently someone was moving about, cooking a meal. Young Hardesty crept around to the east side of the cabin.

Tied to a stub stood Bowen's thoroughbred, his fine coat sweat-caked. He had been ridden hard. As there were no fresh tracks leading down into the cañon, Young Hardesty surmised that the horse thief had entered from the desert side, that he had not been there long, and that he had stumbled upon the cabin by accident.

Recalling Bedrock's statement that chasing a horse thief usually meant a killing, Young Hardesty decided there wouldn't be any killing this time, by either party. He would simply steal the

horse from the stealer and get going before the latter knew there was anyone around.

Worming his way through the brush, Young Hardesty rose and made a run. He grabbed the tie rope. The thoroughbred reared. A front hoof struck Young Hardesty on the shoulder. His rifle was knocked from his grasp. He found himself flat on his back, wondering what had happened.

Boot heels pounded across the cabin floor. The door flew open. Still dazed, Young Hardesty saw the man who had been in the gun fight with Bowen make a dash for the thoroughbred, untie him and mount. Before Young Hardesty could get to his feet, horse and rider had disappeared down the cañon.

Mad clear through, Young Hardesty limped to the cabin. He found bacon in the skillet. The coffee pot was bubbling. He consoled himself with the thought that the horse thief had cooked his dinner for him.

After a solid meal, Young Hardesty again set out. He wasn't going to let any white-eyed Tejano get the best of him. To ride back to Bowdry and get the laugh would be a fine way to end a vacation!

While the other man was on a faster horse, it wasn't always the fastest horse that won the chase. As he rode down the cañon Young Hardesty set his teeth in the determination to earn the five hundred if it took him as many months. Even at that it wouldn't be bad wages.

The Texan had kept a course a little east of south, heading into a dry and desolate region. Evidently he was making a quick try for the border. Eventually trailing him became monotonous. It called for no special keenness of vision. Determined not to wear his horse out, Young Hardesty jogged along, his pony keeping to the tracks as if the hunt had been a personal matter with him.

The gently rolling sand hills of an hour ago had flattened to gravel-strewn reaches studded with occasional wind-whipped greasewood and cactus. Young Hardesty rode with his lean face set, his eyes fixed on the southern horizon. Not once, even in the open distances, did he skyline the Texan, nor did he see any other living thing, except lizards and an occasional gila monster. It was too hot for rattlers to be abroad.

Hour by hour he wore down the weary afternoon. Had he himself been astride a stolen mount he might have felt considerably more up and coming. As it was, the journey seemed like swimming in a great, tideless pond simply to keep himself afloat—and no shore in sight. But every once in awhile he thought of the five hundred dollars and grew more cheerful.

Once he noted the stub of a brown paper cigarette. Again, he saw where the Texan had dismounted, evidently to pull a loose shoe. Young Hardesty rode on. The tracks of the thoroughbred now showed the left hind foot unshod. Such a horse couldn't go far in that country barefoot.

Aware that by leaving the plain trail and swinging directly south he could reach Campo that evening. Young Hardesty slowed down, sat his horse pondering. If the animal ahead had lost a shoe, no doubt the Texan would make for the nearest town and get him shod. The nearest town was Campo. Yet according to the tracks, the Texan had kept on riding southeast. Young Hardesty decided that he had better stick to the tracks for a little while longer.

As he approached the dry river bed of a stream that had once flowed past distant Campo, he reined up. Heretofore he had been pretty well able to see what was ahead of him. Sometimes an arroyo was a trap. It was in this instance, but not for Young Hardesty. Approaching on foot, he peered over the edge.

In the boulder-strewn bottom stood

the thoroughbred. Beside him sat the Texan, leaning against a rock. His face was white, his head bowed. Queer, if the horse had pitched him, that it was still there. But that kind of a mount didn't pitch. Had it stumbled and thrown its rider?

As he stared, Young Hardesty saw that one sleeve of the Texan's shirt was considerably darker than the other. He must have been hit in that gun fight in Bowdry.

Cocking his Sharp's, Young Hardesty called to the Texan. The latter raised his head, stared blankly at the figure on the edge of the arroyo.

"Come on down," he said finally, his voice slow and heavy, "you're just in time to lend a hand."

"Got him!" breathed Young Hardesty. But that didn't mean the Texan might not get busy with his gun if he got the chance.

APPROACHING warily, Young Hardesty saw that the Texan had been hit in the shoulder, had lost a lot of blood. Horse thief or not, the man was in bad shape. Still Young Hardesty didn't feel like laying his rifle aside, nor getting within reach of the wounded man, who was tall, broad and of a powerful build. With what seemed like a faint smile, the Texan indicated his own belt and holster. "I reckon we'd both feel more comfortable if I'd take this off."

"Go ahead." Young Hardesty, ready enough to drill the Texan if he started any funny business, watched him unbuckle the belt, which he held out. "You all are a mite young for a peace officer, but I reckon you mean business."

"I'm arrestin' you for stealin' Bowen's horse, there."

The Texan nodded. "We can talk about that later."

He had no canteen. Young Hardesty gave him water, after which the wounded man seemed to brace up a bit.

"A fella in Bowdry bandaged her for me," he said, indicating the wound in his shoulder. "It didn't bother me too much till I left that cabin back yonder. Bandage must have slipped when I mounted."

"I'll tie her up for you, if you'll pass your word to keep your hands where they belong." Young Hardesty had been studying the Texan, who neither acted nor talked like a man that would break his word.

"Tie her up," said the Texan. "I'm used to keeping my hands in my own pockets."

But not off other folks' horses, thought Young Hardesty as he soaked the Texan's clotted bandana, and with his own, managed to do a pretty fair job. The wounded man seemed to feel better, but he was still to weak to move about.

"Now, son," said the Texan, "I'm inviting you to eat with me. I missed a meal back at the cabin yonder."

"So I noticed." Young Hardesty grinned in spite of himself. The Texan, apparently, didn't have a scrap of food with him, not even a canteen.

"I was figurin' to take you in to Campo," stated Young Hardesty.

"Then you got a big job. I'm kind of hefty for a boy like you to pack."

"Pass your word you'll ride in with me peaceful, when you get in shape?"

"I'll do that."

"Then we eat." Young Hardesty got busy. Meanwhile the Texan sat with his back against the boulder, apparently dozing. When the bacon began to sizzle, however—Young Hardesty's system when away from camp was to skewer a few pieces on his knife and scorch them—the Texan was wide awake.

He ate ravenously. Said he would trade his horse Pardner for a quart of hot coffee—almost, but not quite.

"Throw some of these here peaches

into you," said Young Hardesty, opening a can, "and I'll boil the coffee."

The emptied can didn't hold much, but it was coffee, black and hot.

"Sets a fella right up in the middle of the alley," declared the Texan, after a hearty drink.

"Till somebody comes along and rolls a ball, and then down he goes."

"Or maybby misses. Son, did you ever bark up the wrong tree?"

"Oh, maybe a couple of times."

"When I saw you in Bowdry I didn't take you for a peace officer," said the Texan.

"I ain't, regular."

"Just got a jump or two ahead of the posse, eh?"

There was no posse so far as Young Hardesty knew, but he didn't say so. "A couple of jumps."

"Is Jake Bowen a friend of yours?"

"Not any. But I'm takin' his horse back just the same."

The Texan spoke pleasantly, as if they were discussing some inconsequential matter. "You could. You got my gun. You ain't shot up any. I dunno that I could stop you. But you don't look to me like a horse thief."

"I was thinking the same about you."

The Texan leaned back against the boulder, closed his eyes. He was still pretty weak from loss of blood. Evidently he had forced himself to talk. But he was a powerfully built man. A night's sleep and he would be able to travel, at least reach Campo where he could get a doctor. Just now he was not in shape to do anything but rest. Aware that they would have to spend the night in the arroyo, Young Hardesty fetched his pony down and tied him. Both horses would have to do without water and grazing for several hours yet.

DUSK had settled over the desert. Young Hardesty gathered a few more roots to keep the fire going. He was puzzled by the Texan's attitude. Any man could say a horse belonged to him. But this horse belonged to Bowen, had belonged to him, so it was said, for a year or two. Queer that the Texan also claimed him.

If he had known nothing about either man, Young Hardesty would have said the Texan was straight, the gambler crooked. The gambler might be crooked, but it was mighty certain that the Texan had stolen the horse.

Young Hardesty piled roots on the fire. As it flamed up he gazed at the Texan. Was he foxing, waiting until he got strong enough to make a quick getaway in the dark? If the Texan thought there was a posse on the trail, he would be likely to do that. Perhaps it would be a good idea to hog-tie him, or at least rope his legs so he couldn't move around any.

About to get his rope, Young Hardesty paused. The thoroughbred was standing over the Texan, nuzzling his shoulder.

"I know we ought to get going," said the Texan, reaching up and patting the thoroughbred's muzzle. "But you'll have to wait a spell, yet."

"He seems to know you," said Young Hardesty.

"He ought to. Raised him from a colt."

Young Hardesty didn't believe it, but he was curious. "How'd you come to lose him?"

"I'm out of smoking," said the Texan. "Thanks." He rolled a cigarette and leaned back. "Long about two years ago, Bowen was running a gambling joint in El Paso. My brother was a wild kid then. He got to hanging round Bowen's, playing a little when he could scare up the cash. Pretty soon he got to borrowing from his folks. I lent him considerable myself.

"One time, when I was laid up with a busted leg, the kid took Pardner here, without asking for him, and rode over to

El Paso. Now some time before that I had had a little talk with Bowen, told him that if the kid showed up he was to run him out of his joint, not let him play. Told him the kid was in trouble already, what from borrowing and selling stuff he ought to have left where it was. I could see that Bowen didn't like the idea of being told how to run his business, so I let it go at that. Only I let Bowen know I'd make a call on him myself, if the kid ever gambled in his joint again." The Texan stared into the fire.

"How old was he—your brother?"

"About sixteen, then." For a few minutes the Texan lay back breathing hard.

As he gazed at him in the flickering firelight, Young Hardesty was pretty sure the wounded man wasn't putting on. He was mighty weak, probably suffering considerable pain. Sometimes a bullet wound would numb a fellow a few hours and then begin to bite.

"Sixteen," reiterated the Texan, again sitting up. He rode Pardner into El Paso and put him up at Whalen's livery. That night, in Bowen's joint, the kid lost what little money he had. He was drunk. I reckon he wouldn't have put up my horse against a hundred dollars if he hadn't been drunk. Anyhow, he lost the horse."

"I've knowed fellas to do that," declared Young Hardesty. "But they didn't bellyache about it."

"Bowen," said the Texan slowly, "knew the horse belonged to me. He tried to buy him once. The kid was only sixteen. If that ain't enough to put Bowen in wrong, there's more." Again the Texan ceased talking and sat staring into the fire.

"Then you figure he's your horse?"

"It don't take any figuring. Bowen was chased out of El Paso for running a crooked game. When the peace officers overhauled his outfit they found that the roulette wheel was spiked, had a brake so he could stop it anywhere he liked.

"Mighty smart contraption. A little wire running along under the table to the floor and under the carpet to a button. All Bowen or his dealers had to do was to work that button with their foot and stop the wheel to suit their own ideas. My brother lost the horse playing that same wheel."

"Bowen said he'd give five hundred to get his horse back," stated Young Hardesty. "It looked kind of good to me."

The Texan smiled faintly. "How does it look now?"

"If I was takin' your say so, it might look different. But how do I know you owned the horse, first off?"

"Take off Pardner's saddle and bridle and turn him loose," said the Texan.

"And he hightails it for nowhere. I'd look pretty, herdin' you into Campo and tellin' the town marshal you done stole a horse—and no horse in sight."

"Do you reckon I'd be putting myself afoot?"

"Mebby you wouldn't. But as for turnin' the horse loose—"

"Try it. I'm giving you my word he won't stray."

Hesitatingly Young Hardesty accepted the challenge. If what the Texan had said was so, it was only fair to give him a break.

UNSADDLED and loose, the thoroughbred stood watching the Texan alertly. "Recollect I ain't using rein or rope, strap or whip, just talking to him. Pardner, come here!"

The big bay thoroughbred came and nuzzled the Texan's chest.

"Now go and lay down. Come on, now, no fooling!"

Reluctantly the horse lowered itself and lay with head outstretched.

"Up!" said the Texan. In a flash the thoroughbred was on his feet, shaking

the yellowish sand from his back.

"Now kneel and say your prayers."

Slowly the big horse let himself down on one knee, his other foreleg angled out, his muzzle against the ground.

"You've prayed plenty. Up, now!"

The thoroughbred came over and stood near the Texan. Young Hardesty was all but convinced that the Texan owned him, but not quite.

"You could 'a' learned him them tricks and not owned him," he said, gazing admiringly at the well-schooled animal.

"Did you ever know a fella to teach a strange horse to come to him when he whistled, when the horse was on the run and the fella was riding him?"

Young Hardesty made no answer. One circumstance especially convinced him that the Texan really owned the animal. The horse had been in Bowen's possession for at least two years. For two years the Texan had not seen the thoroughbred. Yet the horse obeyed him as if they had been together constantly.

Still Young Hardesty couldn't quite let it go at that. "Howcome you didn't locate Bowen till he lit in Bowdry?"

"Bowen was up in Montana, hiding out. He didn't show himself down this way for quite a spell. When I got word there was a card man over in Bowdry owning a thoroughbred, I stepped on the train, and stepped off again at Bowdry."

"That kind of left you afoot."

"Correct. But you see, son, I aimed to ride my horse back to Texas."

"Was you gunnin' for Bowen?"

"Not exactly. But I was looking for him mighty hard."

"Come pretty nigh gettin' him, at that."

The Texan nodded. "You recollect a young fella standing behind a telegraph pole when the shooting started? Well, Bowen was keeping pretty close to that pole. I wasn't admiring to let daylight through the young fella behind the pole. It was chancy shooting. Bowen's third shot got me. My gun was empty. So I just naturally melted out of range."

"Hennessy's night man must of been sleepin' when you took your horse."

"He was across the street, getting a drink. I lit out the back way."

Young Hardesty's hope of earning the five hundred went glimmering down the arroyo. The Texan's story seemed to hold together without any extra rivets. However, Young Hardesty did not intend to back down all of a sudden. He would let the Texas man kind of ease into the idea that he was free to go as soon as he was strong enough to travel. Moreover, the Texan didn't yet know there was no posse after him. It might be just as well to let him think there was.

Something of the kind must have been in the Texan's mind for he said, as Young Hardesty tied the thoroughbred, "You were right smart to outride that posse."

"Them fellas in Bowdry don't know this country. I was raised travelin' around the old desert."

The fire had died down. A thin, cool wind ran up the arroyo. The Texan seemed to be asleep. Stripping the saddle from his pony, Young Hardesty fetched his blanket along with the other man's, and laid them over the Texan. His shoulder would stiffen up plenty, even with blankets over it, but they would be of some use. Young Hardesty laid the Texan's belt and gun beside the sleeping figure, and curled down on the opposite side of the fire, his head in his saddle. The horses dozed in the starlight.

Then, as if someone had lowered a curtain over the world, and immediately raised it, the arroyo shimmered in the light of dawn. Young Hardesty came to with a start. No, the Texan was still there, and his horse. A smear of ashes

where the fire had been, an empty can, saddle blankets, his rifle, everything was there. And another day.

FORTIFIED by a can of coffee, bacon and some cold bread, the Texan was able to travel. However, Young Hardesty swung the heavy saddle onto the thoroughbred and led the horse over to the big boulder. The Texan's right arm and shoulder were useless. But he managed to mount without help. His face was set with grim lines of pain and weakness.

"I'm heading for Campo," he said. "Coming along?"

"No. I got business back in Bowdry."

A flash of the Texan's sprightly manner returned. "You'll make a hand yet. Try a term or two with the Rangers. A fellow learns considerable in the service. For instance, if a posse had been on the way, you would have made a fire up on the rim yonder, so they could head for it.

"When you unsaddled I figured there wasn't a posse any too close. Expecting 'em, you'd have kept your mount saddled and ready. But you did fine. If you ever drift down to Texas, ask for Charley Greenough. Most anybody in El Paso can tell you which way to ride."

Greenough! Now Young Hardesty knew who his recent captive was. The Greenoughs of Texas were known as real folks: cattlemen, Rangers and good citizens. Of course there was that kid brother. But maybe he was riding a straight trail now.

"So long," said Young Hardesty, as he watched the big Texan ride down the arroyo.

Bedrock was still in Bowdry when Young Hardesty got back. Young Hardesty himself had mighty little to say to those who questioned him. Had he got his man? Did he get the horse?

"I got plenty," was all he would say. Then he told Bedrock he was going to have a talk with the gambler.

"You'll have to take a shovel along," said Bedrock. "And even then I reckon he won't do much talkin'."

"Somebody get him?"

"A miner from up above. Seems they had some words over in Bowen's joint. The miner is in jail, but I reckon they'll turn him loose. They found something wrong with the roulette wheel, after Bowen cashed in."

"Charley Greenough won't be mad when he hears it," stated Young Hardesty. "He's the fella that owns that big thoroughbred I was chasin'."

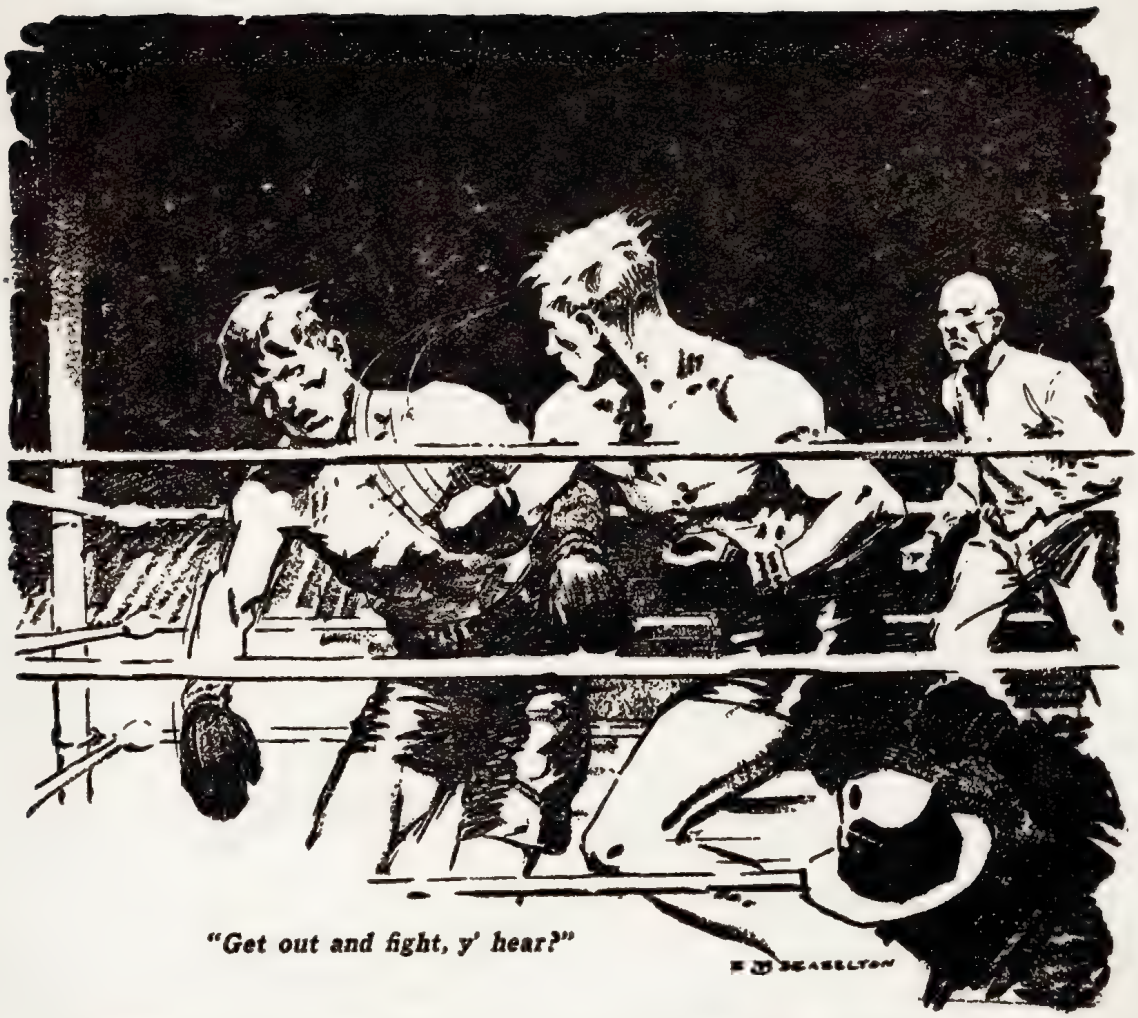
But it was not until they were on their way back to the mine, next day, that Young Hardesty told his story. Bedrock listened with considerable interest.

"Glad you made the trip," he said finally. "It didn't do you no harm."

Although he was not immediately aware of it, Young Hardesty had learned considerable, principally not to get excited and bark up the wrong tree. What a fellow saw on the surface and what was under the surface didn't always tally even. Young Hardesty thought it all out as they jogged slowly across the desert. Rustling stock was a poor game. So was killing folks, or chasing rustlers or killers. After all, the law wasn't such a bad road to travel, even if it did have some mighty funny turns in it. On either side of the law, a fellow was out of luck.

He wouldn't tangle with the wrong kind of folks again, or the right kind, if he were in the wrong. Of course if somebody stepped on his feet, that would be different.

There were different ways of circulating, so as to get wise to folks and things. But how was a fellow to tell what he might circulate into?



"Get out and fight, y' hear?"

DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

By MIKE O'LEARY

ONE hand carrying his legacy, a worn old satchel of equally worn old training togs, young Johnny Dyson pushed inward the door lettered *Regan's*. As he lingered, letting his eyes accustom themselves to the vague dimness of the gym's interior, the sun faded behind him, and the mist, spraying the San Francisco streets, abruptly became a downpour sweeping in great sheets before the howling March wind.

Of this he was unconscious. For the thud of punching bags, the flick of skipping ropes in motion, and the shuffle of feet on resined canvas told that here, at last, was the promised land toward which he had been aiming for all of his nineteen years

Beyond the long, narrow hallway, blazing lights over a ring made sharp contrast with surrounding shadows, as two earnest middleweights strove inexpertly with ten-ounce mitts. Johnny's eyes went from them to the glassed-in office at rear. There, gazing at the contenders, his faded blue eyes evincing patient boredom, sat a leather-faced individual, stubby fingers absently rumpling his carroty-gray hair.

"He's here! Tiger Murphy wrote me he'd be," breathed Johnny. He hastened forward, to speak through the small arch in the glass:

"Mr. Regan? My name's John Dyson, and I'd like—"

"My Gawd!" Regan gasped. "Fightin'

Johnny! The best fighter I ever seen!"

"That was my father."

"Y'r father, sure," agreed Tim Regan. "'Tis like seein' a ghost, lookin' at th' face o' you. 'Twas near twenty-five years ago Tiger Murphy brought y'r father to my gym f'r his first workout. Th' spit an' image o' Fightin' Johnny y' are!" He craned through the opening. "Y're wantin' t' work out here?"

"Yes, sir." Carefully the boy laid down four twenty-five cent pieces. "Is this right? A dollar?"

"Dues is two-fifty a month." Regan pushed back the change. "To Johnny Dyson's boy, they're nawthin'!" He opened the office door and bawled, "Ham! Ham!"

The rub-doctor's glistening black face appeared from nowhere.

"Give Johnny Dyson a locker. An' don't charge f'r his towel."

Ham led to the dressing room. Regan rubbed a bristling jaw and called, softly, "Al—Al Gartland!"

The sports writer arose from the bleachers and sauntered into the office.

"Got a name for you that's been in y'r paper plenty." Tim nodded at the dressing room. "Fightin' Johnny Dyson."

"Dyson's dead. T. B., in 1928. Somebody using his name?"

"His kid," said Regan: "Face just like his, too—when he started, I mean. Curly yellow hair, skin like a girl's, an' big farmer-boy eyes. Thought I was lookin' at a spook f'r a minute."

"Going to start fighting, is he?"

"Gonna try, I guess." Regan twisted his mouth. "But th' spark prob'ly burnt out b'fore it lit his candle. Tiger Murphy drained everything outa Fightin' Johnny."

"'The World's Smartest Manager'!" quoted Gartland, lightly ironic. "Surprised he's not with this one, the way I heard old Johnny was supposed to worship Tiger."

"Tiger's where he can't ruin no more fighters." Tim Regan grinned. "In Arizona, coughin' up rubies in a sanitarium. Got it th' year Fightin' Johnny died with it. Makes y' believe in justice, huh? Y' ever see Tiger?"

"No. He was before my time. I've heard odd stories about him, though. Some of the old-timers seem to think he was the world's luckiest false alarm. Others believe he was really a great manager. I've—"

"Great manager?" Tim snorted. "Great murderer, y' mean. Killed off th' greatest natural fighter that ever crawled through th' ropes, he did—this kid's dad. One o' your tribe built up that Great Manager hooey by drawin' a picture on th' back of a beer sign, one night in Tiger Murphy's bar. Tiger'd —but I'll tell y' later. Here comes th' kid now!"

"Is there someone I can box with, Mr. Regan?"

TIM REGAN surveyed the deep-chested torso and narrow waist; his eyes approved the long arms and broad fists, then traveled down to inspect lean, muscular legs. "Built like y'r daddy, too. A little smaller, y' look. Know what y' weigh?"

"I weighed one-thirty-nine on your scales, Mr. Regan."

"Call me Tim." Regan nodded, pleased: "Y'r a real lightweight, then. One-thirty-five's th' weight now. Y'r daddy'd be ali—"

Gartland interrupted.

"He wants a boy to spar with, Tim." He put out a hand. "Glad to meet you, Johnny. I'm Gartland of the *Telegraph*. Your father was before my time, but I've heard great things about him. Have you done much boxing yet?"

"Not very much." The blond head shook negatively. "But I will."

"Y' like t' fight, huh?" Tim Regan put in.

The boy nodded. "Of course," he said. "Is there someone?"

There was someone. A rangy Italian in long green tights.

"Pat, will y' box a couple with this kid? He's kinda new." To the boy Tim said, "'Meet Pat Kelly, th' North Beach middleweight." They shook hands. Dyson stared at "Kelly's" cauliflowered left ear.

"Yeah," said Kelly. "But le's'a go'a three, huh? I like lots boxin'."

Tim Regan held open a glove. "We'll see. Where's y'r mouthpiece, Johnny?"

"I haven't one. Is it a rule?"

"Just better—in case y' get hit around th' lips much," said Tim.

"I won't get hit around the lips much."

Three men smiled.

"Time!" called Regan.

They touched gloves. Dyson's head drew down, turtlewise. An overhand right made a flashing white arc. A left followed.

"Tough'a—huh?" grunted Kelly. The punch had knocked his rubber mouthpiece over the top rope. He commenced to jab, first coolly, then nervously, then desperately, at a weaving blond head that was always at one side or other of the fist, never at the end of it. He danced and dodged, frantically, futilely, seeking to avoid the fists that rained relentlessly.

"What did you say about sparks and candles, Tim?" said Gartland in an undertone.

"Hell!" chortled Regan delightedly. "This is *him!*" As they stopped he scrutinized the boy, then addressed him: "Tired, lad?"

"No," said Johnny Dyson, "I can box like this all afternoon."

"Notta with me you can'ta!" Kelly tore off his gloves.

Regan turned to finger the Italian's cut lip. "That will need two, three, stitches, Pat," he said. "Deep. Come in th' office b'fore y' go. I'll stick some adhesive over that eye, too, so's th' wind won't make it worse."

"Can I box with someone else, Mr.—Tim?"

"Not unless y' pay 'em, y' can't!" grinned Regan. "Where'd y' learn t' fight that way? Y'r father teach y'?"

"Partly. He began teaching me as soon as I could walk. He was always writing Mr. Murphy about the new champ he was raising for him, too. But I wasn't eleven when—" the boy placed a glove before his lips, paused. "Guess I just picked it up—fighting. Can I box enough to make money at it—right now?"

"You'll do." A light that had not shone in Tim Regan's eyes for a quarter century glowed again. He caught the boy's arm, called over his shoulder, "Let's see y' later, Al."

Gartland, grinning, went to the bleacher-tiers, and opened a newspaper. The office door slammed shut behind the other two.

"What're y'r plans, kid?" Regan watched the boy's face.

"Why—" Johnny Dyson hesitated. "I thought maybe you could help me get a fight or two, Mr. Regan, until I send for Mr. Murphy."

"Y' mean y'r goin' t' let Tiger Murphy manage y'?"

"Yes, sir. He wants to, and my dad always said Mr. Murphy was the world's smartest manager!"

REGAN'S face grew red with the restraint he put upon his tongue.

"Listen, son," he said slowly. "I won't say your dad was altogether wrong about Tiger. But I will say he give him a lot more credit than was ever due him. A whole lot more credit. An' Tiger's been outa th' game f'r twenty years now—a game he never knew a lot about t' begin with. If I was you—"

"Wait a minute, Mr. Regan!" The eyes of Fighting Johnny the Second were sharp and cold as the points of

twin ice-picks. "That's Tiger Murphy you're talking about. The man who paid my dad's sanitarium bills the last two years he lived. The man who put me through school, in Butte, when otherwise I'd have been working in the mines before I was thirteen. The man who fed and clothed me—and my stepmother—until a month ago. And, finally, the man—sick, old, and just about broke himself—who sent me almost his last dollar, so I'd have a comfortable stake when I came down here to get into the fight game, as he and my father had always planned. Tiger Murphy!"

"Comfortable stake?" asked Regan dryly, his mind on the threadbare suit, run-over shoes, and ragged shirt the boy had worn.

Johnny flushed. "Mr. Regan," he said, "my dad used to tell me you were a square-shooter, a man I could trust. Mr. Murphy said just about the same thing when he told me to come here to your gym. So I'll tell you something more. Something I hadn't intended to.

"After my stepmother skipped out with a Galena Street faro dealer, last month, I found the last letter Mr. Murphy sent me. It was pretty long, pretty detailed, and it told me what to do with the five hundred check in it. The letter had already been opened, but the check wasn't there. Not because he hadn't sent it, though. See?"

Regan nodded, "Sure. But seems t' me if he c'd send y' five C's at a shot, he wasn't so broke as y' think. Me, I always had th' idee Tiger was pretty well fixed. How do y' know he ain't?"

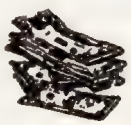
"The bank found out, tracing that check. It had been invested in the town where Mr. Murphy's sanitarium is, for six years. It was all he had, and he'd drawn it out to send *me*. I'm certain, from things I pieced together, that he hasn't even got carfare to come here and join me. Now do you see why I want you to get me some fights—if you think I *can* fight?"

"Yeah." Regan looked into his eyes: "Say—how'd y' get down here, without any dough? An' is that buck th' last money y' got?"

"For the first answer—thumbed it!" said Johnny: "For the second, skip it. I'll get by. Just get me some fights! Will you?"

"O' course I'll get y' some fights!" snapped Regan: "What kinda heel y' think I am? An' I'll skip nawthin'. Get inta y'r duds. Then I'll get y' a room after we eat. Now beat it in an' dress. Y'r Fightin' Johnny's lad, an' that's enough f'r me."

But Tim Regan was thinking, "Enough f'r me—even if I am fattenin' y' up f'r Tiger Murphy t' butcher. . . ."



THE doors of Dreamland Arena was gaping, ready for the outward rush of fans at conclusion of the nearly-ended main event, as Tim and Johnny walked from the building.

"Didn't even make y' sweat, did he, kid?" remarked Regan gloomily. "Now y've slapped over four in a row they'll be givin' y' main events!" Johnny nodded absently, maintaining silence until they reached Fillmore Street, to pause. The veteran drew out a roll of small bills. "Here, hundred an' a quarter. Take it!"

"Did you get your cut?"

"Hell, yes!" lied Regan gruffly. "I wasn't handlin' y' f'r my health! O' course I got it!"

"Thanks, Tim!" The boy hurried across the street.

From behind came the hubbub of an emerging crowd. At sound of his shouted name, Regan turned, to greet the approaching Gartland.

"Hi, Al. What's th' rush?"

"Great fight the boy turned in tonight. Where is he, anyhow?"

Regan scowled at the window of the telegraph office opposite. "Over there, wirin' Tiger Murphy carfare t' come

here an' mismanage him outa th' title he'd win—with anyone else!"

"I seem to get the impression"—Gartland's smile was lightly ironic—"that you're not foremost among those who considered Tiger to be the World's Smartest Manager. Right?"

"Th' World's—? Say, listen Al. I'm goin' t' tell y' how Tiger got that rep. an' where! Let's go some place an' have a drink. It'll take a while."

"Coffee," said Gartland. "I'm on the wagon."

"Well, here's th' Tavern. Their coffee ain't bad, an' I c'n get a drink f'r myself, too. Lord knows I need one!"

Gartland brought his coffee to the table; seated himself and stirred it. "And so—?" he lifted his eyebrows.

"First of all, Tiger wasn't no manager. He was a saloonkeeper. Run a gin-mill on th' Barbary Coast, an' f'r one reason or other, newspaper guys hung out there. One o' them was Dan Creeger—"

"Not *the* Creeger?"

"Yeah. Only he wasn't famous, them days. Let me tell y', though. A souse brought th' first Johnny Dyson inta Tiger's f'r a feed. Johnny'd punched over three hoodlers that was tryin' t' roll this barfly, an' th' grateful lush was makin' a grand story o' tellin' how easy Johnny trounced 'em.

"Tiger listened, all ears. Th' fight game was mixed up with th' bar business, them days. Fans were all drinkin' men. Th' saloon walls was plastered with pictures o' fighters, an' many's th' champ who'd take a double sawbuck f'r lettin' some saloonkeeper put a sign in th' winda that this here champ'd be on hand f'r a certain coupla hours t' shake hands with th' admirin' public! Champions! It'd boost th' barkeep's business skyhigh, *that* day, an' give regular customers somethin' t' talk about f'r weeks after, too.

"So now an' then saloonkeepers would pick up a boy t' manage. Pork-and-beaners, mostly, but even that kind was a drawin' card for a saloon. An' if any fighter that a barkeep managed got *good*—! Well!

"The upshot o' this first meetin' between Johnny an' Tiger, was that Tiger blossomed out as a manager. He didn't know beans about fightin', but he didn't have to. Johnny was great, right from th' start. A *natural* fighter, th' kind that fights from instinct.

"So Tiger asks a promoter customer o' his t' give Johnny a bout, as a favor t' him. After th' first match, all th' promotors was askin' Tiger t' let Johnny fight at their clubs as favors t' *them!* An' by th' time Fightin' Johnny'd won five bouts, he was one o' th' biggest cards in th' country—cert'n'y th' biggest on th' Coast! An' Tiger's business is growin' by leaps an' bounds.

"He moves to a bigger place, puts on a lot o' extry barkeeps, an' is coinin' money. Because, naturally, he sees that Johnny hangs aroun' th' place a lot, even though he don't drink. An' because Johnny'd never been in th' ring b'fore, an' now is makin' more dough an' bein' more famous than he ever dreamed o' havin' an' bein', he does whatever Tiger says. He figures Tiger's responsible f'r it all, an' he sure was a grateful boy. Thought Tiger was a reg'lar god!"

"Where does Creeger come in?"

"I'm gettin' t' that now. One night Creeger's in Tiger's joint. Standin' at th' bar he does a cartoon o' Tiger. Th' cartoon that makes th' reputation o' both o' them, as y'll see. No fancy artist, Dan Creeger, but he c'd draw in a way so's y'd not only know who y' were lookin' at, but so's y'd never forget 'em, either. An' bein' that Tiger was kinda funny lookin' anyhow, Creeger had a cinch, cartoonin' him.

"A SKINNY guy, Tiger Murphy was, with a thin white face, eyes black as beads, an' eyebrows like two moustaches. Thick, bushy, juttin' out like little black visors. What a car-

toon Creeger made o' him! Lord, I c'n see it yet. An' Creeger *knew* it was good, too.

" 'Tiger,' he says, 'if I c'n figure out an excuse t' use this cartoon in my sheet, it'll give y'r groggery more popularity than if Jeffries, Johnson, Fitzsimmons an' Sharkey was t' stage a battal-royal in front o' th' free-lunch counter, with Frank Gotch refereein' an' Lillian Russell holdin' time.' An' then th' idee comes t' him.

" 'Listen,' he says, 'Johnny takes orders from y', don't he?'

" 'Sure,' says Tiger, 'He's my boy. ain't he?'

" 'That's it!' Creeger says. 'I'll say what a great manager y' are. How it's your head that wins them fights, not just Johnny's mitts.'

" 'Well, all right,' says Tiger, 'but I'm a pretty fancy cakewalker, too. Couldn't y' write about my dancin', instead?'

" 'Nope,' Creeger says, 'it's gotta be on th' sports page, because that's th' only place they'll use my stuff. But don't worry,' he says, 'this yarn I'm cookin' up will make 'em *all* sit up an' take notice. Not only o' you an' this here place, but o' me, an' my drawin', too."

" 'Tiger,' he says, 'Y' don't realize it yet. But from this night on, y'r not only th' owner o' th' classiest tonsil-teasery on th' Barbary Coast. Y'r not only boss o' th' best lightweight in th' game t'day—even if he *does* have a tough time makin' th' weight, an' sh'd be fightin' welters, except that welters ain't a popular class. Y' are,' he says, settin' his glass down, 'Tiger Murphy, th' World's Smartest Manager. Wait'll y' see th' story under this picture t'-morra!'

"Well, Tiger laughs an' sets up a couple more drinks. Then he forgets all about it, prob'ly. *I* did, an' I'd heard th' whole thing. But next day that story ran—an' what it did! Started Creeger on his way t' th' big time, f'r one thing. Like I said. But that wasn't a marker t' what it done f'r Tiger!

"He handled th' night an' mornin' shift at his bar. Afternoons he was off. When he sees th' story, he sees its possibilities. So, comin' on shift that night, he's dressed t' kill.

"Johnny was fightin' th' next night. But this here night, th' bar was jammed with folks, lots of 'em strangers, all yearnin' f'r a peek at th' World's Smartest Manager. An' at eight sharp—in walks Tiger.

"He was wearin' black clothes, brim hat, an' pleated shirtfront, like th' professional gamblers usta. A high stiff collar, an' a string tie, paten' leather button-shoes, gloves, an' carryin' a cane. As he enters, th' mob's eyes turns towards th' door. An' Tiger knows it's him they're come t' see.

" 'Evenin' gentlemen!' he says, sweepin' off his hat like th' hero in a Woods mellerdrammer. His skimpy black hair is shinin' with grease, plastered down on his forehead in a fancy curl, an' them mustache eyebrows, twirled up at th' ends, is standin' out from his long white face, cocky as th' very devil.

" 'Drinks f'r everybody!' he orders his head barkeep: An' when th' glasses is on th' bar, he proposes a toast.

" 'Gentlemen,' he says, 'let's drink t' th' greatest lightweight that ever pulled on a glove—Fightin' Johnny Dyson, th' comin' champion o' th' world!'

"An' at that minute th' boy they're toastin' so hearty is lyin' in th' hot-room of a Turkish bath, so dried out b' now he's forgot what it's like t' spit; rubbin' himself with a towel t' drag th' last bit o' moisture from his tortured body so's he'll be down t' weight f'r tomorra's fight. An' there's another guy on hand t' start doin' th' rubbin' *for* him, when he gets too weak t' do it any longer himself. Between weighin' time an' ringtime he'll drink a lot o' beef broth, an' eat some big steaks, that're supposed t' bring back his strength. But they

can't put back what this dryin' out process is takin' outa him. His life!

"Well, that toast of Tiger's never comes true. Less'n two years later Fighting Johnny creeps back t' Butte, broken in health, old b'fore his time, t' live a while on what's left o' th' money he's made fightin'—still believin' th' guy that ruined him was th' greatest fella in th' land.

"Y' see, bein' so fond o' Tiger t' begin with, when that yarn about him bein' such a smart manager come out, Johnny took it more serious than anybody—exceptin' Tiger himself. An' if anybody'd took a notion t' tell th' lad different—an' nobody did, because, though a lot o' folks had doubts, Fightin' Johnny kept right on winnin' till th' time he cracked—he wouldn't o' listened, anyhow.

"He died, still believin' it. Before he died he passed it on t' th' kid. Now *he* believes it—an' will, till Tiger makes one o' his bonehead plays that'll put th' boy outa runnin'. He ain't bad at heart. Tiger ain't; just dumb. But he's no manager f'r this boy—'r any boy!"

"How about Tiger himself, though?" asked Gartland. "He's sick. Do you think he'd leave a sanitarium to manage a fighter?"

"He'd leave Heaven f'r th' chance t' show off, I know 'im!"

TIGER MURPHY'S wasted frame shivered under the warm sun all summer, for the steady Pacific breeze chilled him throughout, and he seldom removed his long black coat until the September lull. It was over his arm as he paused in the gym, addressing Regan.

"We're fighting in Portland, week after next," he rasped.

"Licked 'em all down here," agreed Tim. "Who's th' latest victim?"

"Young Stanley Ketchel. Ever hear of him?"

"Heard o' anyhow fifty *Young* Stanley Ketchels, but th' only one worth his salt was th' original. Remember him? Y' had his picture in y'r saloon, up by th' cash register."

"The old middleweight champion? Great pal of mine. Sorry I never got to see him fight."

Regan thought: You're a liar. Ketchel was dead before you got into the fight game. Aloud he said:

"He was great, that one. Had a shift like nothin' seen b'fore 'r since. Lord, what a honey that shift was!"

"What was it like?" The bushy black eyebrows of the World's Smartest Manager lifted.

"Huh?" Regan returned to the present. "Oh—that shift? Le's see if I c'n show y'. He'd throw over a right swing without no left lead—an' miss, o' course. That'd bring 'im close up, like this." He illustrated. "Right foot forward, right arm down, half-turned to his left. Then he'd smash in with a haymakin' left hook—an' th' referee'd start countin' 'em out."

"Looks easy."

"That's what a thousand fighters thought, too," said Regan grimly.

"For five, six years there, rings was fairly cluttered with sleepin' beauties that foundered, tryin' t' make that shift jell. Ketchel was a natural southpaw who changed around when he started fightin'. That explains part o' it. But dozens o' southpaws tried it, too. It never worked f'r them. Nobody but Ketchel could do it right!"

"Show me again—slow," said Tiger Murphy. Then: "Still looks easy."

Regan abandoned the subject. "Will y' be wantin' Benny Vallenga t' spar with Johnny when y' get back?"

Tiger nodded.

"I'll tell 'im t' keep his ears washed, then," said Regan. "Say, where is Johnny? He ain't been in f'r a coupla days."

"Made him lay off. Down too fine.

Don't want him getting weak or sick."

Regan thought: "Mighty considerate these days, ain't you?"

"So long, Tim," said Tiger.

Al Gartland entered the nearly deserted gym. "Saw Tiger going out just now. Told him he ought to angle for a title shot with Ray Randall. Randall's so busy dodging Young Cadroni he might take the match, figuring Dyson was a setup because they haven't heard much of him, back East."

"Good idee." Tim closed the office door. "He could beat Randall. So could Cadroni, o' course. An' Val Breschini might, too. It's a question o' who gets to him first. Randall's washed up."

"They offered Tiger a bout with Breschini in L.A.," Gartland informed him. "Tiger's ready, but Breschini won't come West without a big guarantee. So it's off."

"Good thing f'r Johnny, too. He's not ripe enough yet. A few more bouts an' he can take 'em all. But he needs seasonin'."

"Tiger don't think so," Gartland said. "He asked if they couldn't get Cadroni, when Breschini passed it up."

Tim shook his head, wordlessly signifying disgust.

"You don't think Johnny'd have a chance with Cadroni, Tim?"

"Everybody's got a chance if they got two mitts. But Cadroni's too smart f'r him right now. An' if Cadroni decisioned him before Cadroni licks Randall, Johnny'd have long white whiskers before Cadroni'd give him a chance at th' crown, afterwards."

Three weeks later, Tiger Murphy broached the subject, also.

"The boxing commission's told Randall he has to fight Cadroni within six months or forfeit his title," he said. "So I've wired Cadroni's manager an offer to box Johnny here, Thanksgiving Day. When Johnny stops Cadroni, Randall'll have to fight him, instead. Not bad figuring, eh?"

"Nothin' short o' marvelous," replied Regan with heavy sarcasm. "Y've seen this Cadroni in action, o' course?"

"No." Tiger drew out his handkerchief, coughed. "Have you?"

"Just movies, is all. but—" Regan turned at a familiar step. He smiled. "You worked nice t'day, Johnny. Tired?"

"Thanks, Tim. No." Johnny buttoned the collar of Tiger's top-coat: "Mr. Murphy, we're in a draft, and I'm warm yet, from training."

"Quit foolin' with my coat!" snapped the manager irritably.

"That necktie's hard on the eyes." The boy grinned: "I thought—"

"I do the thinking!" rasped Tiger: "Your part's taking orders."

Regan thought: You won't be here to give orders six months from now, in spite of the way Johnny babies you.

Johnny looked at Tiger. "Let's grab a cab home, Mr. Murphy?"

"Don't need a cab to go six blocks," snarled Tiger. "We'll walk."

"Let's don't," said Dyson. "I'm tired from that workout."

"Well, if *you're* tired," grumbled Tiger, "we'll take the cab."

THE Golden Gate Park gardener who usually said, "Why don't you get a horse, young fella?" varied his formula this morning.

"I see y'r fighting Cadroni, Johnny."

"Thanksgiving Day," said Dyson. "Tiger made the match last week."

"I seen a movie of him," said the gardener. "Pretty classy boy. Think you'll beat him?"

"Tiger thinks so. Where was the movie showing?"

"Down town. The Empress. It's still there."

Returning from his roadwork, Johnny mentioned it to Tiger.

"We'll go have a look at it," said Murphy.

They saw the picture through twice.

"He's better than the champ," Tiger admitted. "Think you can reach him with your left hook, Johnny?"

"Let's see it again!"

And after a third viewing, the World's Smartest Manager said, "Johnny, he's awful smart. Maybe I'm bringing you along a little too quick?"

"Well, I've won 'em all so far, haven't I. Mr. Murphy?"

"Didn't have much trouble with the last one, that bum up in Portland, anyhow," said Tiger. "Two rounds."

"Young Whats-his-name? Ketchel?"

"Yes. Ketchel!" A memory stirred in Tiger's brain. "Come on, Johnny. Let's go. I just thought of something."

To Tim Regan, Tiger said, next afternoon: "What time do you open up the gym! Twelve?"

"Twelve-thirty. Why? You don't get here till after two."

"We're going to train in secret," said Tiger: "Starting at ten-thirty tomorrow morning!"

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Regan.

"Thinking of the admissions? I intend to pay you something extra."

"Not that. I'm thinkin' o' th' soreheads, they'll blame *me*."

"I'll fix that," said Tiger. "I'll give the papers a story to run. Fans'll know I've got something up my sleeve. I wasn't nicknamed the World's Smartest Manager for nothing, you know!"

"Urr-h," growled Regan. "What'll Benny Vallenga say, when he hears he's gotta get up in time t' spar at ten-thirty a.m.?"

"He won't. We're not going to use sparring partners. Tim. I'll want a key to the gym."

"Here's mine—th' only one. Y' can get a copy made. Take it." Half aloud he muttered, "No sparrin' partners! If that ain't somethin'!"

"I know what I'm doing!" Tiger's skull-like face scowled with annoyance.

"I hope so, Tiger!"

Three weeks later, walking down Market Street, Tim encountered Benny Vallenga. "Where've y' been, Benny?" he hailed. "Guess it was quite a blow to y' when Johnny quit usin' sparrin' partners, huh?"

"Yeah."

"Ain't fat, though. Y' usta get fat when y' didn't train."

"Well," the sparring partner mumbled, "I've got a little gym at my house. I work out evenings, just to keep feeling good."

"Ambitious, huh?" remarked Regan. "I see y' got a mouse over y'r right eye like Johnny used to hang on y'. Th' punchin' bag hit back at y'. A new suit, too. Cigarette coupons?"

Vallenga caught Tim's arm. "Tim, I can't fool *you*. But if Tiger ever finds out Johnny is training with me on the q.t., Johnny will run me out of town. He says he's gotta follow Tiger's orders—"

"Tiger ordered him not t' box."

"Johnny says his old man always followed Tiger's orders an' never lost, and so will he."

"I'll keep still," said Regan. "But tell me this: How long?"

"Every night," said Vallenga. "Right from the start. His timin' is good, Tim."

"Hurr-h," Tim grunted. "An' he's sure Tiger's the World's Smartest Manager, though?"

"Why, he showed me a big book of clippin's," Vallenga said. "And it says right in print in every one, Tiger Murphy gives orders an' Johnny fights. Just like always. His old man always won—" He broke off. "Here comes Gartland. I'm duckin'. So long, Tim."

Regan turned to greet the approaching Gartland. "Hello, Al. What brings you out?"

"My feet," Gartland replied: "Say, Young Cadroni hit town today. I saw him working, at the other gym. Dyson

had better be in shape—or else. But how can he be the way he's doing?"

"Search me," said Tim. "What do you think?"

"Secret training? No sparring partners? I think Tiger's ruining him, that's what. And Johnny's letting him. The boy's a sap!"

"Yeah, a sap," said Regan slowly. "But a fighter too."

GARTLAND thought of that remark when Johnny Dyson appeared at his desk, a week before the fight.

"Al, you critics don't think I have much chance with Cadroni, do you?"

"I wouldn't say that, Johnny. But you'll admit it looks funny, this ouija-board schedule you're following. We know what Cadroni's doing—belting the lugs off all the good men he can hire. How *can* you be fit, with no boxing?"

"Supposing I told you I have a better chance than you think. Would you believe me?"

Gartland stared at him for a long minute. "Yes, Johnny. I would. But have you?"

Dyson nodded.

"Glad to know it," said Gartland. "Is that the favor?"

"No. Listen, Al." Johnny leaned closer. "Have you heard of that old story on Tiger, the first one that called him the World's Smartest Manager? It ran in your paper, before I was born."

"Heard of it and seen it. Dug it out of the old files six months ago. Swept the country, that yarn."

"So I heard. Here's the favor. Would you—will you, for me—modernize it and run another story to the same effect? Now?"

"For Pete's sake, Johnny! Do you know what you're asking? Make it something easy, like blowing up the Ferry Building, or shooting the mayor. I'd be laughed out of town if I ran any such cockeyed pipe-dream. Especially at this time! It's too close to the fight."

"But supposing, with all the others predicting I'll lose, you say I'll get no worse than a draw—and I prove you're right?"

Grantland reflected. "Say, what's the idea, anyhow?"

"Al, that tag of 'The World's Smartest Manager' is the breath of life to Tiger. And he won't be here much longer. He's sicker than anyone excepting me knows. Will you run the story?"

"Kid," said Gartland, "I know you think a lot of Tiger. But from my angle, he's the Dyson tribe's Public Enemy Number One. They say he killed your father, making him sweat down to weight. I wouldn't know about that. But I do know *your* fights were won in spite of him, not because of him. And he's tossed you in against competition no boy with your short experience should tackle."

"Did any of them beat me?"

"No. I'll grant you that. But this Cadroni—I can't see—"

"Do you take my word, or not?"

"Well—" A long pause. "Maybe I'm a sucker. But I will."

"And you'll run the story?"

"Yes," said Al Gartland reluctantly, "I'll run the story."

"And you'll make it *good?*"

"I don't do things halfway. When I go, I go for the works. Now scram, before I change my mind!"

Later, Tiger said: "See that story they ran, Johnny?"

"Yes, Mr. Murphy. It was swell. Wonder where they got it?"

"Papers used to be full of stories like that, when I had your father," said Tiger, with a show of indifference. He coughed.

"Johnny, maybe you'd better not train today."

"Sure, Mr. Murphy. Do I need a rest?"

"It won't hurt," said Tiger: "And, Johnny?"

"Yes, Mr. Murphy?" said Johnny.

"Do you know how I got my reputation? How I made your father into the fighter he was? Because he listened to me, Johnny, the way you do! In the old days, calling instructions during rounds wasn't barred, like it is now. I used to run all around the ringside, telling your father what to do. Like this:

"Now with the left, Johnny! Now! Now with the right, Johnny! N—!"

Tiger stopped abruptly, halted by a fit of coughing.

"Better lay down. Mr. Murphy. Talking's hard on your lungs."

"It's not my lungs, Johnny. Something I must have eaten."

"Sure, Mr. Murphy. Something you ate."

"You'll never be a smart-aleck and think you know better than me, Johnny, will you? I know best, Johnny. You won't forget?"

The doors of the smoke-filled Auditorium had been opened temporarily, following the semi-windup. They were closed now, but Tiger Murphy still shivered. Irritably he snapped at Regan:

"Remember, Tim. You're just handling the water bottle. Don't talk to Johnny. That's my job!"

Across the ring the swarthy, battle-scarred face of Young Cadroni, shining from cocoa-butter applied in his dressing room, grinned confidence. Above his robe of purple satin, small black eyes glittered as he stretched arms full-length. His hoarse voice chuckled to his manager:

"Get a load o' the old guy wit' th' punk, will y'? Looks like a tank-circuit parson!"

"He'll have a service to say tonight, eh Tony? Not a wedding service, either. Here, take your mouthpiece."

The manager was lean, tall. Beneath the V of sleek black hair his tan face stood out against his snowy white collar. He removed a gray double-breasted coat, folded it fastidiously, then rolled up his shirt-sleeves.

"Come on, Tony! They're calling us for instructions!"

The Auditorium darkened. Wave upon wave of billowing smoke floated into the glaring pyramid at its core, to spiral above the group at ring-center, to clothe them in warm blue mist, and swirl up to the hot beam overhead. The murmur of the crowd faded, died.

Clang!

Again they met at ring-center, and the smack of leather on flesh mingled with the echo of the gong, was drowned in the roar of the crowd.

Young Cadroni staggered under the impact, plunged back in.

"The lucky punk! Getting away with a right lead!" Cadroni's manager bit polished nails. "If he tries that again, Tony'll crucify him!"

Cadroni was rallying, hurling fists at the midsection, driving hooks at the head weaving before him, striking shoulders, elbows, more often thin air. A left flashed at his cheek and he rode with the punch, but not in time. A right crashed against his temple and he clutched at the spinning roulette of leather that came for his surprised jaws. He seized the arms, held them, snarled:

"Smart, ain't y', hayshaker! How's—this?" He ripped the cuff of his left glove at Johnny's chin and caught a short right hook in return, as Johnny fought loose before the referee's "Break!" was even framed for utterance.

Cadroni's head was lowered and he was fighting as he had never fought before, thankful for weeks of training, thankful for the experience of sixty-odd previous battles. A sweeping left hook that was half-uppercut smashed against his mouth, and he clamped teeth into his mouthpiece until they met, severing the vulcanite protector. He danced backward, spat it out, then lowered his head and moved in again, alert, inviting the punch's duplication.

It came, and his own right flashed over it, countering at the chin, to snag behind Dyson's neck as Johnny's follow-up right did the same behind his own.

"Box, Tony, box!" yelled his manager.

"Shut up, you!" bellowed the referee.

They fought loose and Cadroni stood erect, stabbing a left at the rolling head. It landed lightly and he followed with a right cross—to the forehead. And then Dyson was on him again, hammering, hammering, and there was nothing to do but slug. They were smashing away toe-to-toe at the bell.

"How do you like the way I pick 'em?" screamed Gartland into the ear of a press-box associate.

"Batting a thousand—so far!" the other yelled back.

"Tired, Johnny?" rasped Tiger. Dyson shook his head.

So the fight went to the fifth round. Again the newspaperman leaned toward Gartland.

"Dyson's way ahead, Al, but he won't knock Cadroni out!"

"Don't be too sure," cautioned Gartland, hoarse from shouting.

Cadroni's manager was tense, terse. "Smart him, Tony. Butt, heel, take th' play away from him. Throw his timing off, see, then keep in there, belting with both dukes. If y' lose this round, good-by to the Randall shot! Th' punk's tough, but he's green. Worry him!"

Clang!

FIGHTING Johnny sprang from his stool, shuffling swiftly to Cadroni's corner. He was met by a left to the head, followed by a right that encircled his neck again. In the clinch Cadroni relaxed, then tightened unexpectedly and twisted, to jam his glove-heel to Johnny's chin. Dyson's head snapped back, and an instant later Cadroni was slamming a veritable hurricane of leather to the body.

Young Cadroni was showing the stuff that had made him the outstanding contender. His lowered head caught Dyson on the chin-edge, tore a cut half its length. Johnny bent his own head, slugging back, but his timing was out of rhythm by a split-second, and Cadroni's blows were landing.

"He's beating Johnny!" Tiger gripped Tim's arm.

"Just a flurry," said Regan, not turning. "He'll make it up!"

Pressing his luck, Cadroni flailed rights and lefts to the body and head, as Tiger Murphy's momentary dismay turned to a stare of horror, as the crowd, on its feet, sensing a turn in the tide of battle, howled, bellowed, knocked off hats, waved arms, exhorted the fighters. Heads down, the two smashed at each other with both fists.

Clang!

As Johnny dropped his fists, Cadroni's right caught him flush on the chin and his knees sagged.

"Sorry!" grinned Cadroni, extending gloves for acceptance of the hypocritical apology. Johnny turned away without touching them. Cadroni's head tossed. Laughing, he went to his corner.

"He's got you looking bad, Johnny! The crowd's with him now!" Tiger was leaning over, talking into his fighter's ear.

"I'll make 'em change their tune!" said Johnny. Tiger talked on.

"How's the prophet, Al?" snickered a fellow critic.

"That's only one round!" But Gartland looked worried.

Clang!

Young Cadroni tore across the ring and was met by the up-sweeping left hook. Momentarily set back, he shook his head, and water showered from the black hair in glistening drops. He ripped in with both fists, slugging madly, receiving as good as sent for a brief instant, then, punch by punch, regaining his lead. They clinched, fought loose.

Johnny's uppercut found its mark again, at which Cadroni redoubled his efforts, in-fighting, using head, elbows, backhands, every shady trick of ringcraft in grimly striving to maintain that previous round's edge. Johnny's short right landed, rocked Cadroni to his heels.

Head lowered, he dived back in, and as the expected hook-uppercut tore out, Cadroni moved his head ever so slightly. Johnny's right missed completely, and he spun half around, whirled by its wasted force.

"Now — Johnny!" screamed Tiger Murphy.

Johnny swung an overhand right and missed. His right foot followed through. For a fractional instant he was a quasi-southpaw.

"My Gawd!" gasped Regan. "Tiger's orderin' th' Ketchel shift!"

Cringing from what he knew must follow, Tim saw Cadroni gather himself and hurl a vicious right cross that brushed aside the left hook aimed at his chin. He heard the solid *smack* as the blow landed, felt sinking sickness at his stomach's pit as the ring-floor shook with the impact of Johnny's inert body.

As Cadroni hesitated, too dumbfounded to immediately trot to a neutral corner, as Tiger stared at the ring with the fixed gaze of a sleepwalker, Regan spoke.

"Y' boob!" he snarled. "Y'r damned brainstorm's ruined this boy's chances, just as y' killed his daddy before 'im! Y' blunderin' fathead—"

He paused. Maddened though he was by the result of Tiger's folly, he was none the less appalled by the effect of his words on the old man.

"I—I killed—Johnny?" Numbly, Tiger's bony fingers touched his old-fashioned pleated shirtfront. Remorse gripped Regan.

"Sorry, Tiger—didn't mean it!" he mumbled, turning ringward again.

"Five!"

"Six!" The referee looked at the motionless figure, then toward Cadroni. Cadroni moved forward, arm outstretched eagerly.

"Finish y'r count!" screamed Regan.

"Seven!"

"How's the prophesying racket, Al?"

"Shut up!" snapped Gartland savagely.

"Eight!"

Tim Regan's eyes were glued on the timekeeper now. Slowly that official's hand was lifting.

"Nine!"

Clang!

AND Regan was into the ring carrying a limp body with dragging heels, to the stool, shouting:

"Johnny—listen—this is Tim! Listen, Johnny!"

Tim flung the bottle of smelling salts into the aisle and darted a hand into his pocket. The flame of a match gleamed behind Dyson's head, and Regan's nostrils twitched at the smell of burning hair as he watched the closed eyes.

"Uh—oooh!" moaned the fighter.

"Wake up, Johnny! F'r Gawd's sake, wake up! There's half a minute gone a'ready!"

"S' mar-rr, Mi'z Mur'rf?"

"Listen, Johnny! Y'r in a fight! A fight—y' hear?"

"Wr-rh—figh-figh'."

"A fight!" Regan slapped the face roughly. "An' y' gotta get out there an' tincan, y' hear? Y' gotta get *out there.* On'y fifteen seconds left!"

"Ge' ou' whaaa?"

"Fight. Fight! Get out an' fight! There's on'y eight seconds left. Pull y'rself t'gether. Five seconds—four. Three seconds left. Get out an' fight, y' hear? *Get out and fight!*"

Tim Regan jerked the stool, pushed a limp Johnny Dyson erect and forward, then crouched down himself.

"He'll never make it—but I tried, anyhow!" He glanced at Tiger Murphy,

sitting dazedly on the floor. At the resounding *smack!* of a blow, Regan turned again.

"One!"

Tim forgot commission rules, forgot everything but Fighting Johnny Dyson, on hands and knees, shaking his head stupidly.

"Stay down f'r nine, Johnny! *Stay down f'r nine, y' hear?*"

Johnny's stare turned toward him. There was the glimmer of returning consciousness in those eyes.

"Eight!" He was gathering himself.

"Nine!"

A blond madman with rubbery legs was plunging at Cadroni. The madman's arms were at his sides. They began swinging as Cadroni shot a right at the unprotected jaw. *Smack!—smack!*"

Regan put a hand before his eyes and waited for the counting to begin anew. . . . As the bedlam scream of a fight-crazed mob rose to a pitch that set steel beams overhead whining, he looked again at the ring.

Smashing with both hands, Fighting Johnny was driving a thoroughly bewildered Cadroni before him. Cadroni's brown body was blotched with glove-sized patches of purple, his arms were hanging helplessly, his face a gory pulp, the long black hair plastered in grotesque, dripping strings. As Regan watched, incredulously, he plummeted to the canvas, a shuddering heap.

"One!"

The referee stared down at the unconscious warrior.

"Two!"

Another look.

"Three—" He halted his count and turned to Cadroni's manager. "Come get your man!" he shouted. "He's out for the night!"

The house lights went on. The voice of the fan-pack was a confused babble as Tim leaped into the ring and clutched Johnny's arm.

"Kid, y'r th' greatest fighter that ever lived! Even Tiger Murphy couldn't ruin *you!*" He snatched the microphone, handed in from the ringside. "Here, Johnny; talk inta this mike!"

Tiger Murphy's face, turned ringward, was ashen. Al Gartland had an arm about him. "Steady, Tiger. You'll be all right. Steady!" Al was saying.

Above them, Johnny Dyson's voice poured into the microphone.

"I'm the luckiest fighter in the game," he began. His gaze, penetrating, steady, was on Tiger, then on Gartland, then on Tim Regan:

"Just one thing saved me from losing this fight tonight by my own dumbness. The presence in my corner tonight of the man whose wise counsel means more to me than anything else on earth. I guess you all know who I'm talking about: Tiger Murphy, my manager!"

Tiger's tense face wreathed in a shaky smile. His sigh was a sigh of ineffable contentment, but his head fell back limply.

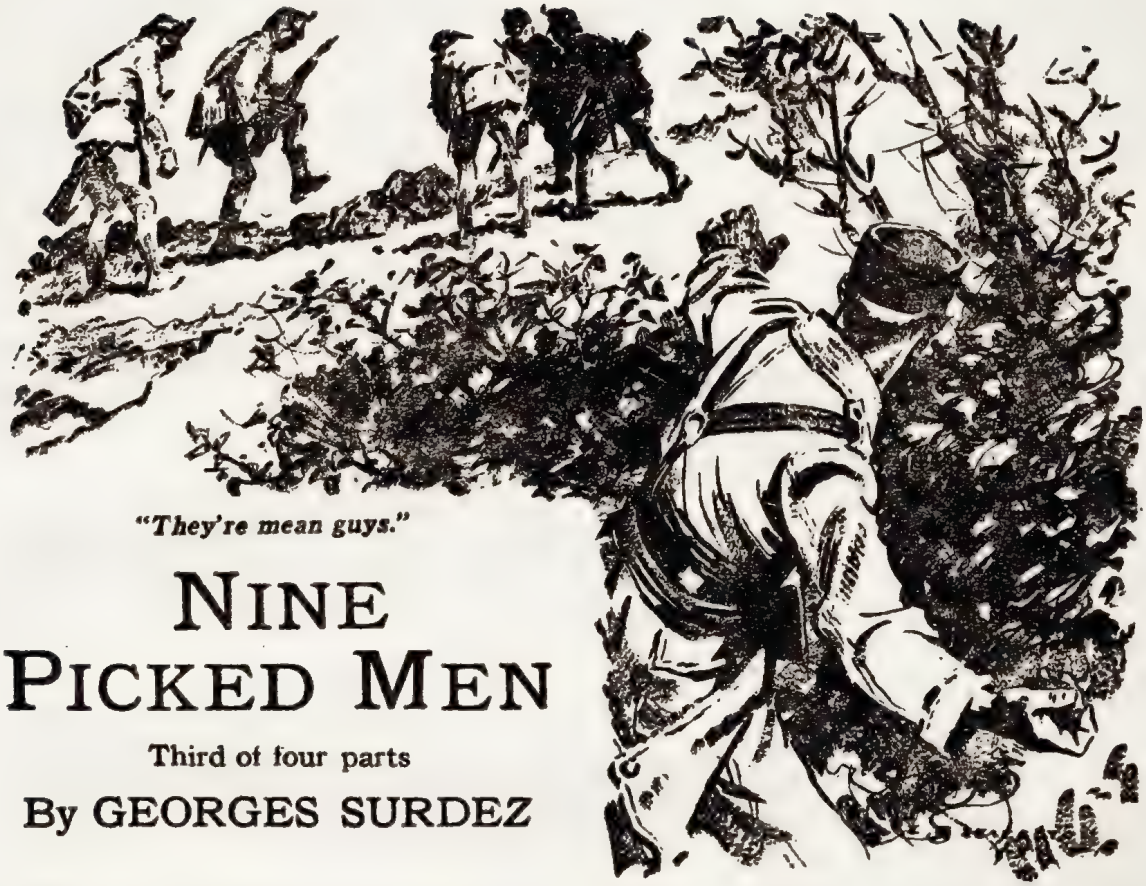
"Tiger!" Gartland shook him. "Open your eyes! Here's Johnny! Tiger—"

SOMEWHERE in the void beyond, the soul of the first Fighting Johnny Dyson, endlessly boring the other souls with tales of the World's Smartest Manager, may have heard that broadcast, and hearing it, said to them:

"That's my kid! He'll be champion before long. And you know who he owes it all to, don't you? The man I've been telling you about! He's saying so himself, isn't he?"

And if such a thing might be, then surely that supreme moment came as he added:

"And here he is now! Fellows—meet Tiger Murphy!"



"They're mean guys."

NINE PICKED MEN

Third of four parts

By GEORGES SURDEZ

"Chesty" Maddock, former football ace, had seen his college career blasted by scandal and tragedy, and had fled to the Legion, enlisting under the name of Brandon.

Now, one of a recruit detachment at Sidi-bel-Abbes, Brandon had learned that there are easier ways to escape from the world than behind the iron fists of the Legion.

From the very first, he had been marked for special attention. Detesch, his room corporal; Kolb, the sergeant at barracks—officer after officer had signaled him out for special punishment. After whipping the former in a cafè—and spending months of punishment duty to make up for it—Brandon was ready to listen to any feasible plan to escape from a life that had become intolerable. And in the person of Matloka, a Spaniard who offered money and safe conduct in return for escort across the Spanish frontier, Brandon had found the way out.

From Dar-Kaid-Hassan the nine picked conspirators whom Matloka had chosen pulled strings to be placed in the same scouting detail. The rest was easy. Disarming the sergeant in charge, they struck across the desert—not toward the sentry posts, but for Spanish territory, three days' march away!

CHAPTER VIII

THE ROAD TO NOWHERE

They were across.

Sometime, somewhere, in the fleecy morning mist, the detachment had passed the unmarked frontier between the French Protectorate and the Spanish Riff. Matloka and Janreisch, standing on the crest they had reached, checked with their maps and notes, picking out landmarks. At last they nodded, satisfied, and shook hands joyously. The others gathered close for confirmation.

Nine men in full French uniform, bearing arms, on foreign soil, nine de-

serters who had accomplished the first leg of a strenuous journey. Alone, Lambeke seemed shaken, nervous. Brandon looked at him with vague pity, for he trusted these men who had managed the undertaking so capably.

The leaders were speaking together in rapid German that beat on the ears like a drum. There was some discussion as to the best direction to take, the first port of call. Matloka had a sheet of very thin paper in his hands, on which were typed two columns of names. Brandon learned that in the first column were the names of outposts, in the other the names of their commanders. Jardins was asking how long ago it had been written, and shrugged when he was told it was over three months old.

He was of the opinion, Lambeke translated for Brandon, that Matloka and the group should head for a large center, close to the coast, there to hide and negotiate with some important officer, a major, a colonel, so as to have several hundred bayonets on their side immediately. But Matloka shook his head: It did not enter into his plans, manifestly, to have come so far to apply for a post as second-in-command to one who would reap the power and the credit.

"Tabrettin is nearest. Lieutenant de Torrealta is in charge." Matloka had shifted to French again. "We served together and were more or less related. He is as sick of the swine as I am, I happen to know. Native soldiers in the garrison. Let's go."

A quick gesture stilled possible protest. They followed him, marching openly on the trails now, in plain sight of villages. A native passing, perched on a small donkey, looked at them and gaped. Then he dug his bare heels into the animal's flanks and trotted away faster.

Brandon walked on, filled with pleasant thoughts. In another week, possibly, he would be boarding an Italian freighter at Melilla. Another week to Genoa, time to get in touch with his family through the consulate, to establish his identity, then passage home! He could be in New York inside a month, three weeks if he took a fast steamer.

The path led uphill, through pebbly embankments four feet high, separating groves of trees. For some minutes, an unnatural silence had prevailed around them. Then a sharp challenge resounded, and a soldier stood in the road. He was clad in brownish khaki, wore *espadilles* instead of boots, the flesh showing through the lacings between the canvas uppers and the rolled puttees. He was young, swarthy, and appeared very resolute.

Matloka held up both hands, strode forward slowly, talking fast. Brandon understood that he was asking for the officer. Lambeke touched his elbow, hung back. "Looks bad. They're tipped off, meeting us halfway."

"Sure," Brandon retorted. "The French notified them that a gang of us was on the loose. They don't want a lot of armed foreigners prowling about."

Another man had come in sight, a third. One of them wore chevrons, probably a non-com. He was arguing with Matloka, pointing at the Legionnaires standing some distance away.

"He says we have to lay down our arms right away," Jardins explained to the rest. "Matloka says he will not surrender except to a commissioned officer. He's smart—he doesn't show that he knows who it is. Now the other guy is saying that they have a lot of men all around. Matloka keeps asking for the officer. I think the guy's going to call him—"

In fact, the sergeant left, while the two privates barred the way, bayonets ready. A few minutes passed, slowly. Matloka brought out a package of cigarettes, offered it to the soldiers, who refused, took out one, lit it. His hands were steady, but Brandon could see that

the knee of his left leg jerked every few seconds. He was not as sure of himself as he had pretended to be. Or perhaps, no matter how sure he was, the stakes he played for were so enormous as to affect his nerves.

At last the sergeant returned, accompanied by a taller, slimmer, younger man, who wore a garrison belt and had metallic ornaments on his cuffs, colored tabs on his collar. A handsome, dark fellow, with an easy smile and great love of life, that was sure. Brandon warmed to him instantly.

And his sympathy increased, when, with six paces of Matloka, the young officer halted suddenly, saluted, then stepped forward respectfully to shake hands. It was the beginning. Matloka would win them over one by one, just as he had just done with this man. The soldiers with the purple sashes—Spanish regulars, Jardins said—grounded their arms.

MATLOKA led the lieutenant a few feet away from his men, talked earnestly. At first, the other nodded approval. Then Brandon, his heart sinking, saw that he was opposed to what the deserter suggested.

The two came toward the group of Legionnaires. Matloka's face was tight, his eyes blazed with anger. His companion appeared apologetic. They exchanged glances, Matloka grinned as if to say, "Well, go ahead and see how they take it," and the Spaniard started to speak in French.

"My duty should permit me no hesitation. You are on Spanish soil and should surrender your arms at once. However, your comrade assures me you will refuse. I don't care to take the responsibility to shed blood, so I make you the following proposition: If you are unwilling to give up your arms and await decision by higher authorities after due investigation of your case, I shall permit you to return to the French side, under guard of my men, but preserving your own weapons. The frontier is but five kilometers south of here, and in an hour this unpleasant situation would be out of my hand. So far as I am officially concerned, you may have lost your way, and in this region, strict rules cannot be adhered to."

Janreisch looked at Matloka, who shook his head. Then he consulted the Legionnaires with a sweeping glance. He saw that all realized, as he did, that by the time they attained the border, French troops might be waiting for them. In any event, what would be the purpose of remaining loose on the French side?

"This gentlemen," Janreisch stated, indicated Matloka, "is our chief. Let him make the decision."

The lieutenant was cracking, Brandon could see.

"I have sixty men within call," he declared. "Sixty—"

Matloka resumed speaking in Spanish. The younger man shook his head, started to walk back to the sentry post. Matloka followed him, threatening, pleading. It was no use. The officer halted, and called out: "You have five minutes to lay down your arms, or to head for the border. After that, force must be used."

To show his resolution, he drew a big automatic pistol from his holster. Matloka then stood in the middle of the path, raised his voice, declaimed resounding sentences. Brandon recognized such words as liberty, honor, traditions, soldiers. The officer called out for him to stop. It was his duty to end seditious speeches.

Matloka continued his harangue, addressing the soldiers.

"Los renegados perfidos—"

There was a shot, then three more. Brandon dropped to his knees, instinctively. And the scene before him decomposed itself into tiny incidents, each

one detached, separated.

After firing, the officer and his men had vanished from the road, taken cover prepared in advance. The three warnings had been given, the Spaniards were within their rights. Matloka was standing as before, but both hands grasped his middle; he was bending forward, his mouth agape, his face twisting with pain, like that of a drowning man gulping for air.

Then he collapsed, face down, huddled in the roadway.

"STEADY," Janreisch said. "Watch the embankments. Shoot anything that moves. Who has the automatic? You, Krüger?"

"Me," Konnor declared; "I use it better."

"All right, cover the road ahead. I'll see how badly the captain's hurt. Come along, Brandon."

The American followed him, his shoulders hunched, his palms moist. More shots could whir down the lane any moment. Janreisch grasped Matloka, started to turn him over on his back. But the man startled them by rising himself.

"The swine knew where he was shooting—through the belly—" he explained, panting for breath. "But look—" He opened his *capote*, the top of his trousers, lifted his shirt. Instead of the bare flesh, he revealed a sort of leather corset, made up of small pockets, flaps shut by brass snap-fasteners. "That's how I keep my gold money. A cuirass of gold, as it were! But even at that, a nine millimeter slug has a kick. I thought I was dying."

Janreisch smiled thinly. "You're lucky. But as long as we are all alive and well, how do we get out of this? They don't seem to fall for your speeches, as you led us to expect. Better hurry up and find that cousin of yours."

Matloka laughed. "That was he! But he has sworn allegiance, he says—forgetting that he had sworn allegiance before, and not under compulsion. Told me that he was under special supervision, and could not take a chance, that his men would not obey him if he departed from instructions. And *that* was once a gentleman!"

"What do we do?" Janreisch kept to the point.

"Swing north."

"As Jardins suggested this morning?"

"Exactly," Matloka agreed. "Events proved me wrong. That often happens, you know."

"Not often to the same man in this line of business," the former staff-captain reminded him. "You almost had an excess of proof a moment ago."

Matloka gave him a hard glance, but made no reply. He ordered the detachment to climb the right embankment, and they emerged cautiously into the open, among the small trees. There was no sound. Yet there were sixty men very near, sixty armed men. And they were nine—no, they were eight.

For Lambeke, finding that his speculation was failing, had vanished like a shadow.

"Well," Matloka remarked, "we can do without him. Come on."

He took the lead. Brandon's opinion of him had altered with the rest. Matloka, despite his financial backing, was not a genius. But he was to be admired for his courage, his energy, his physical endurance. In addition to the common burden of pack, weapons, ammunition, he carried gold, which is no light metal. He had overreached himself, that was obvious, but that is likely to happen to anyone who starts a difficult mission.

A hundred yards, two hundred. The party paused to scale a small wall dividing fields, a partition of uncemented dried stones. And a string of coppery, spasmodic detonations rattled out from the left, an automatic weapon. They

huddled down, crouching below the crest of that fence.

"I think Breiss caught one," Konnor announced.

Breiss had caught one, below the left arm-pit, through lungs and heart. He was on his side, his face very calm, and the perspiration slid down his hardening flesh as on brown marble. Brandon looked at him, unbelieving. Dead!

He had seen few dead men in his life. And he had never seen anyone pass over from life to death with that horrible simplicity, one moment thinking, moving, and the next nothing. He had not been four feet away from Brandon, and the bullet which had entered his flank and "stopped his clock," must have passed within inches of the American. His throat tightened, but his chief sensation was one of terrified indignation.

"They're killing people here," he mumbled stupidly.

They had killed a man and were trying to kill more. Bullets flecked the stone wall, whining shrilly, in long, curving streams of sound. Brandon, flushed and furious, snapped the breech of his rifle open and shut, sliding a cartridge into the chamber. They wouldn't get away with it!

Two from nine left seven—seven, after ten minutes!

IN the lee of the wall, an argument was raging in German. Janreisch had suggested that so far they had not fired a shot, hurt no one. Matloka invited him to quit if he felt like it, reminded him, however, that he had accepted the trip of his own free will, and had received pay which he had done nothing to earn. Jardins agreed with the chief that a bargain was a bargain, that they had not expected to find everything quiet and peaceful.

A detonation nearby broke up the conversation abruptly. Dankowitch was ejecting the empty shell, showing his even white teeth under the blond mustache.

"*Eh bien*, Janreisch my friend," he laughed; "I'm afraid someone has been hurt." He indicated Breiss with a lift of the chin: "He's paid for. One to one."

"And Lambeke?" a voice inquired.

"Oh, Lambeke? They can have that coward for nothing."

"You're a man, Dankowitch," Matloka complimented.

"Thanks. Yes, I'm a man, and a man who's lived long enough not to have reason to surrender to a pack of garlic-eaters. Your pardon, Matloka! I'm a Russian; I'm a Legionnaire. If they want my gun, they'll have to earn it."

Brandon, fired to emulation, peered over the top of the wall, pushing his rifle ahead. He could see a few silhouettes moving about beneath the trees. He selected one, pressed the trigger—and missed. But he must have come very close, for the chap dived behind a trunk.

"We better get moving," Matloka outlined. "We'll be caught from the rear if we halt here too long. Brandon, take Breiss' ammunition. No need to take away his breech-block."

Brandon overcame his reluctance, unbuckled the dead man's harness, and slung the belt holding the three leather pouches over his head and across his chest, like a bandolier. It weighed ten or fifteen pounds, and was awkward to carry. Yet cartridges might be needed later.

"Could you rid us of that automatic of theirs, Konnor?"

"Sure thing—"

The gunner had improvised an embrasure for his piece. Brandon himself had located the enemy's weapon. The Spaniards were firing from behind screening bushes. The long magazine was snapped into place, Krüger knelt by, holding another ready in his hands.

"What would you say, Janreisch,"

Konnor asked: "Three hundred and fifty?"

"About right."

Konnor lay stretched out full length behind his weapon, which seemed a prolongation of his body. He fired five shots, too high, well over the heads of his targets, five shots too low, into the ground. Then, with a grin, having ascertained the exact spot, he let go with fifteen shots in quick succession.

Brandon saw men rising, to get away; there was the brief pause as Krüger replaced the ejected magazine, and the men were blasted away. As the last one dropped out of sight, the automatic stopped short, precise to a split second.

"Thirty-seven?" Konnor asked, as Krüger removed the unfinished magazine to insert a full one. The other counted the remaining cartridges, nodded. "Two over what I thought. They don't take cover as quickly as *bicos*. We're showing them what we are, eh?"

Having gained the respect of their foes, the Legionnaires climbed over the wall. They marched on the slope in open order. Only a few shots greeted them.

Brandon continued like a cork in a torrent. He refused to think of the difficulties ahead: Miles to be covered in hostile country, toward an unknown destination and a reception that was growing highly speculative. He was wanted by the French Government for desertion with arms and baggage, eight years of prison at the minimum. And now he was wanted by the Spanish Government as a murderer.

CHAPTER IX

"NO MAN ESCAPES!"

MELILLA might as well have been located on the moon.

Again all was quiet, save for the creaking of equipment, the rattle of weapons. Brandon wondered if the pursuit had ceased, if the others had been content to report them to the next garrison. After an hour more, he grew hungry and ate some of the soggy Arab bread he had stuffed in his musette-bag yesterday afternoon. The others likewise ate as they walked.

All were oppressed by the sensation that no matter what Matloka said, they were adrift, without definite goal, lacking purpose. When an extravagant scheme fails, it falls very flat. And Brandon's mind played with the same thought that occupied all the others:

"Why not ask Matloka to split his money, scatter and allow each man to make out as well as he could?"

They reached a stream, a thin trickle of clear water oozing in a deep bed. And they halted to refill the canteens. There was nothing in sight on either bank for several hundred yards, nothing save brown boulders and thick bushes.

Brandon uncorked his metal bottle, dipped it in the cold water. But before it was full, he had to leave, bounding upward, until he crashed to safety in the middle of a bush. The air had whispered again, the shooting had resumed. When he looked back, there was only one man near the water, sitting, grinning foolishly. It was Jardins. The left leg of his trousers showed a widening patch of darker color.

"Come on, get out of it—" one of the Legionnaires called.

"I'd like to," the Hollander shouted back: "But I think my leg's broken. I can't use it. No, keep out of it, you fool—" for Krüger was rising as if to go to his help. "All right, I'll try it!"

He planted the butt of his carbine on the ground and started to hoist himself erect. A burst of remote detonations, the splashing of water, cracking on stones, and he dropped back and moved no more.

"Get his ammunition—" Matloka

started, looking around to designate a man.

Dankowitch shrugged.

"Too risky for what it's worth, old man! And we have plenty left for the six of us. By the way, those compatriots of yours are not unintelligent. They cover the spots we must pass with a few sharpshooters, and intend to pot us at leisure. Haven't seen one for a long way, and I've been looking!"

The party had gathered some thirty feet from the stream, among the bushes. Brandon became aware of a sensation of cold down his leg, and saw that his opened canteen was leaking water. He screwed in the plug mechanically. But a few moments since he had removed it, and nothing was changed in the scene, save Jardins out there and the absence of the white birds.

"If they want my gun, they'll have to earn it!"

"Well, what are we going to do?" Janreisch asked. He was using French now. "Surrender would be unhealthy. Your people appear to have hit a plan to decimate us time after time without much danger to themselves. Can you guarantee that—"

Matloka shrugged, shook his head: He could guarantee nothing.

Brandon pitied him. He was so bewildered, so astonished that events did not bow to his will. And these men who had called him captain now contemplated him almost with hatred.

"You aren't sure that you can swing anyone over, are you?" Janreisch challenged. "Well—"

"Eh, my dear fellow," Dankowitch interrupted him, "it isn't done, you know."

"What?" Janreisch asked, angrily.

"What you are doing. Protesting when your card does not turn up, when your number fails to come out. I don't know where you were educated, really!"

"But it is so stupid to lose one's life like this!"

Dankowitch looked at the ex-captain, removed the cigarette from between his lips. As danger grew more and more pressing, he was growing more and more calm, deliberate.

"What's your life worth?" Dankowitch shrugged. "Not very much. Matloka found you a Legionnaire, with seven years of Legion back of you. You were an officer—*la belle affaire!* Who hasn't been an officer at one time or another, somewhere or other? Suppose you are shot ten seconds from now—who loses anything? Not us, certainly not you. You get so excited over words, when the facts are so simple." The Russian held out his long arm, offering his hand to Matloka. "Dear friend, we do not blame you. If you die, die at peace."

Matloka grasped the hand, silently. Brandon would have liked to do the same thing as Dankowitch, but he was no Russian and could not discuss sentimental urges freely and elegantly, even now.

Their leader had played in poor luck. He was the greatest loser. The best proof of his belief in himself had been the gambling of his life. He had swayed eight men into sharing his fate, but Brandon felt less childish, less gullible, when he thought that others had believed in him enough to spend thousands of dollars and much effort on backing his undertaking. And those others had been more careful of their dollars, in all probability, than Legion-

naires were of their lives.

IT was odd, Brandon thought on, how differently from the expected various men turned out. Janreisch, educated, confident, military, was repining like a fool. Matloka, the man of steel, was bending like a tin blade. Jardins, the placid Dutchman, who looked least like a hero, had thought of the safety of a comrade, even when he knew he was doomed. Lambeke, a military medal man, had turned coward. And Dankowitch was emerging as the dominant personality in the surviving group.

"We better come to a decision," Janreisch persisted. "If Matloka has nothing to suggest, let him allow someone else to take charge."

"Dankowitch," Matloka gave his choice.

And one after the other, Konnor and Krüger approved. The Russian's first reaction was to laugh.

"Of course, when the battle is lost, appoint a Rusky to command. Then defeat will appear normal. As a matter of fact, I am the ideal man for chieftain of a band of beaten counter-revolutionists, possibly the only one who's had serious experience. Konnor, the lucky fellow, was so drunk in the Crimea that he cannot possibly remember a thing.

"I compliment you upon your choice, if only for one reason: You are certain not to go through the process of choosing a leader again. For I am the last survivor, invariably. This will make the eighth or ninth time since August, 1914. Pardon me if I bore you.

"My decisions will be dictated by logic. We are convinced that the Spaniards have planted snipers at convenient spots for several miles northward, so that northward progress is suicide. On the other hand, we cannot surrender here, for the good fellows are so heated by now that they would kill us as soon as it was safe. That leaves the west, barred by a blockhouse, the east, which leads nowhere in particular. And the south, where our former comrades are waiting to greet us with open arms and a prison sentence. South we had best travel. Men escape from prisons; no man has ever emerged from the grave. With one exception—" he crossed himself, Russian fashion.

"I must point out that—" Janreisch started.

"Silence in the ranks, there! I know that we cannot cross that stream immediately, that they are still waiting. We will therefore depart, as if keeping on northward. That is, five of us will depart, leaving one of us hiding here with a couple of hand-grenades. If I know anything about soldiers, as soon as we are out of sight, those who are watching this creek will come to loot our good friend's body. A Legionnaire with grenades and a repeating rifle should account for them, especially as we shall not go very far and will return at the double. Who'll stay?"

"I will," Brandon offered. But all had spoken at almost the same time.

"Experience is needed," Dankowitch told Brandon, kindly. "I believe Krüger to be the best man. Krüger, old man, you have one German to avenge, one German to atone for. Don't hurry, don't miss—and sock it to them."

The five started off noisily. They walked through the bushes of the bank, edged up hill. Konnor had the automatic ready at his hip, and Brandon was at his side, with a replacement magazine. This made him realize that the group was getting short of hands. Or a comparative novice would not have been functioning as loader!

A shot crashed out ahead.

"A signal that we have moved away from the stream," Dankowitch explained. "Fired in the air. They have instructions not to draw our fire except from sure shelter. Good discipline

among your chaps, Matloka. Too good for us, eh? Slowly now, and look about you—" He strolled in the lead, rifle nestled in the hollow of his arm. Brandon thought grimly that he had nothing to worry about. That Russian, he was safe until the others were dead!

THEY all expected the explosions of grenades, yet the crashes caught them by surprise. One, two, three, four, in rapid succession, then two more, when the five Legionnaires already had turned to run back to the ford. And as they ran, they heard the detonations of a Lebel carbine—*one-two-three*—a pause as the clip was ejected, replaced—*one-two-three*—a pause—*one-two!*

Krüger stood on the bank, laughing, as they trotted up to him.

"Two got away," he announced. "I was so excited that I kept missing them."

Dankowitch gave him a shove. "Come on, nice work. Get across before they get wise—"

There were several bundles of khaki in the shallow gully of the brook, and Brandon saw others upstream. But it was only a flitting vision, as he was running hard to keep up with the others. His breathing was labored, his back ached. He loosened Breiss' ammunition belt from around his shoulder, tossed it away. He was crazy to carry it, as he never had a chance to shoot!

Dankowitch dropped to a fast walk.

"Their traps are not prepared to the south, and we're less than six kilometers from the border. Come on, Legionnaires, win yourselves a court-martial instead of a coffin."

"A fancy coffin they'd give us," Konnor opined.

"True, they must be angry with us. How many did you get, Krüger?"

"Four I am sure of. They came down, sure enough, as soon as they heard that signal shot. I let them bunch up, turn over Jardins. They're young fellows, green as hell, but mean guys. The one with the red chevrons, a corporal, maybe, laughed and shoved his heel down in Jardins' mug. After that, I didn't feel so sorry for them.

"I flung four pills quickly, and they all went down at once, so I got to thinking I was pretty good and had got them all. I threw two more to be sure, and I'll be damned if three of them didn't wake up and start to run upstream as if the devil was after them. I got one with my first shot, the one in the lead, figuring out that he, being the further, would be the harder. But when he dropped, the others started to dodge around, to leap on the bank and down again, never stopping for a second. I should have started at the rear, where the others wouldn't have noticed, and worked up to the lead guy. They were so scared that I started to laugh, and missed. One of them was hopping as he disappeared, so I think he caught one."

"You should be cited," Dankowitch complimented, "but I don't believe you will be. But we're not doing so badly, seeing we are up against regulars. Konnor got at least four, I got one—that's nine killed, one or more wounded, and fifty scared stiff, against two of ours killed. If they were only Spanish Legionnaires, the colonel would forgive us. He hates the Spanish Legion, because, he says, it cheapens the name. 'Musicians,' he said, 'Mountebanks, monks, Spaniards, anything you wish. But Legionnaires, never!' "

They passed over the wall behind which they had crouched during the first attack. Brandon recognized the spot, saw the glitter of cartridges in the grass. Breiss' corpse was not where they had left it. They came upon it, a few yards farther, stripped naked, very likely by native marauders.

"We're making good time," Dankowitch commented. "We were a couple of hours from here when Jardins was

killed, and we've just made it in less than one. Let's keep trotting."

Suddenly, he stopped, looked at the others with a peculiar smile. The road on which they had met the Spaniard soldiers first was below them. Then he lifted his arm, pointed. "Five kilometers to the border. We have an officer's word for it. Is this guarded? One way to find out—"

And he leaped down the embankment, stood still.

"All right, come on."

They slid after him.

"Look there," Krüger said. He indicated.

Another nude body, ignobly mutilated. Forgetting their danger, the six crowded near. It was Lambeke.

"We misjudged him," Brandon said, prompt to contrition.

Dankowitch indicated the dead man's chest with the muzzle of his rifle. There were five small holes grouped close together, near the heart.

"No. He surrendered, all right," the Russian stated. "And they executed him, probably after we started to fight. As for what's been done to him since, I don't like to think Europeans did it. Native prowlers again. Looks like a woman's job, eh, Konnor? Poor slob, he learned that what seems safest often isn't. See what surrender means, Janreisch? You're no longer fighting Muscovite barbarians."

"Cut out the war reminiscences," Janreisch growled, "and let's get going."

CHAPTER X

GANTLET OF DEATH

THEY kept to the road for a few hundred yards, then turned south on a scarcely discernible trail. They had followed this for fifteen or twenty minutes when a knot of men emerged from the thicket two hundred meters ahead, scattered rapidly and opened fire. But although they had had the advantage of surprise, and attacked resolutely, they did not hold their ground long.

Konnor raked their line with the automatic, assisted by Janreisch as loader, for Brandon had tired of being inactive and was shooting, shooting, until the metal of his Lebel rifle grew hot. The onset did not last two minutes. The regulars retreated to cover, pursued by carefully aimed bullets.

Then Brandon noticed something that upset him: Matloka was crying. He blamed nerves at first, then he understood: It was hard for a man to fire on his countrymen, perhaps harder to see them beaten when they were two to one. Dankowitch grasped the ex-captain by the shoulder, urged him forward.

"You'll get used to it. I had to. And, if it's any consolation, your murdering little cousin is done for."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. He was the third man from the left, and the only one an officer, with a cross-belt. How many this time, Krüger?"

"Hard to tell. Five, six—there were about fifteen when they came out. Why?" Krüger shrugged. "What difference does it make? There were sixty, you know, and they probably got reinforcements since morning."

"Statistics," Dankowitch replied. "I'd say six." All this time, they were walking rapidly, across country, turning, watching. "I got two, I suppose you got one. Brandon? One? Konnor? Oh, you exaggerate! Four, indeed! Say two. All that fall aren't dead. Six, as I said. I have an eye for such things. Six and nine make fifteen! Against two—"

"Three—" Janreisch corrected.

They stopped and looked at him. At first, they saw nothing unusual, until the Austrian indicated his body, below the fourth button of his *capote*. There was a dark stain there. Dankowitch circled the wounded man, clucked his

tongue. The missile had pierced through, and Janreisch's loins were drenched with blood. How he had walked even this short distance was hard to understand.

"Bad?" he asked softly.

"I'm afraid you can't go much further."

"I do feel weak. But there's little pain yet."

"Good." Dankowitch mechanically patted the doomed man's arm. "We'll leave you your gun and cartridges. Maybe you can collect a few. You see, we—"

"Of course, naturally," Janreisch protested. "But see here—I may faint away. I don't want to be taken alive, manhandled, tortured." He was insanely calm, in voice and gestures. "Will you do me a favor? I have religious objections to suicide. Otherwise, I would have gone long ago. Will you please—"

Janreisch knelt, painfully, linked his hands over the bole of the rifle. Brandon felt his brain cracking. This could not happen. But what else was there to do? Leave him wounded, to be beaten before his death? Remain at his side and lose six lives instead of one?

"My duty," Matloka said. He drew the automatic pistol taken from Eullard, verified the loading, approached the kneeling man. "Forgive me, friend," he said, and pulled the trigger.

Brandon was aroused from his horrified stupor by a vigorous kick in the pants, and Dankowitch, with a ferocious scowl, ordered him to move on. Already the other three were some distance ahead.

"I'm sick," Brandon protested.

The Russian shoved him again, and when he had the American moving, talked in a friendly tone: "The border can't be more than three kilometers away. Come on, lad, you're not the kind that gets killed on a first scrape. You have the sign on you. You'll live to go to prison and regret it."

THEY trotted and walked, trotted and walked. Brandon had discarded his bags, shoved the few articles he wished to keep in his pockets. The fatigue of the last three days tore at his muscles, numbed his brain. He was hungry and nauseated at the same time. When he closed his eyes to clear them of the burning sweat, the mumbling, quivering lips of Janreisch appeared to float ahead, and Matloka's lean hand, the burnished metal of the gun, the little patch of the wooden handle, brown and criss-crossed with indented lines, showing above the flesh of the tightening fingers.

"Trot—" a long, jerky interval. "Walk—trot—walk—"

Were those men made of iron? Was there no limit to their endurance? And all of them were several years older, all except Konnor much smaller men. But they had had the proper training; their legs had covered endless miles, their backs had borne endless burdens. They were professional soldiers, plying a trade that does not permit improvisation.

"*Quarante-sept*—forty-seven—"

That was Thorn's signal. But why was Lesley giving it in French? A shift, a shift—the American moved sidewise with an effort; a hearty thump caught him in the flank. "*Sacré nom de dieu,* rookie, look where you're going!" Shrouding mists in his head were ripped open, and Brandon saw Konnor's furious face. He apologized. "All right, all right, but you're pretty big to go blundering around. Well, what do you think of it?"

"Of what?"

"Forty-seven cartridges, that's all I used today. I got at least six guys. I think two more, but what's the sense of arguing? Say six. Eight cartridges apiece, with an automatic rifle. And Matloka said when we started that we shouldn't use the automatic, that it wasted ammunition. What does he

want? With a carbine, Krüger got one with eight cartridges, and he's a good shot. You can't take Dankowitch into consideration—he shoots clean, through the head, up to four hundred meters—but you don't find a guy like him in a thousand riflemen. I bet you that out of the half dozen shots he's fired today, not a bullet was wholly wasted. He's an exception. What I mean is that an automatic, properly handled—"

Brandon listened to the big Slav's continuous chatter as he went uphill, tensing his leg muscles with distinct effort to haul his weight toward the crest.

"Some fellows, Brandon, can never learn to use an automatic properly. It isn't played like a hose. It comes natural to me—"

"Like piano playing to some people," Brandon remarked.

"That's it. Without boasting, I'm a—a—"

"A virtuoso," Dankowitch called over his shoulder. "A virtuoso of the automatic-rifle. Just like Krüger is good with the grenades. And that's why you're a grenadier when in regular formation, while Krüger handles the automatic. You never saw an army in the world that didn't spend loving care on sticking the right man in the wrong place." He called a halt, and they drank from their canteens, lighted cigarettes. "Well, we've covered at least four kilometers, but the devil only knows whether we're on French soil or not. Let's have a look at the map, Matloka."

Matloka shrugged. "Janreisch had it. I forgot—"

Dankowitch looked at him, his blue eyes flashing. Then the familiar, ironic smile flashed in turn. "Oh, well, I suppose one does forget things. You'd have made a fine Russian officer. I remember one time, in Rumania, when two batteries could not fire because some youngster had forgotten to provide alcohol for the recoil cylinders. There was plenty of water, but that froze."

"Sorry," Matloka started. "I seem to make an ass of myself—"

"We all have done that, or we wouldn't be here," Dankowitch consoled him. "We'll chance it and halt at the nearest convenient place. I don't know about you chaps, but I'm done in."

They plodded on once more. About an hour and a half of day remained; they had been on the go since before dawn. Dankowitch at last indicated a rugged hill, what the French term a *piton*, and they ascended to the top. There, they lifted loose stones to form a low parapet. Konnor laid his automatic rifle in position, muzzle facing north.

"In camp," he said with a cheerful laugh, "the artillery faces the enemy."

With their unshaven, powder-grimed faces, their torn, stained uniforms, they resembled bandits. Krüger's legs were bare to the shins, as he had used his puttees to make a huge turban, replacing his lost *képi*. They ate and they joked, and felt that life was worth living. Except Matloka, who could not laugh.

"When I first saw him," he said, speaking of the lieutenant whom Dankowitch had slain, "he was four years old and I was eighteen. His cousin was marrying one of my cousins. That was in Cadiz, and he had on a little suit of velvet, with a white lace collar, like a little king from a painting. He entered my regiment as a cadet when I was already a captain. I got him out of his first scrape with a girl. That was only seven, eight years back. He kissed me and called me his older brother. Then he shot me in the belly—and he's dead."

"*Mektoub*," Dankowitch pointed out. "It was written, as our good friends the Arabs so justly say. That saves them a lot of wondering."

Brandon stretched on the hard earth as gratefully as on a soft mattress. He tilted the peak of the *képi* to keep the sun from his eyes, and dropped off to sleep as one dives into water.

(To be concluded.)

The ranks breasted the slope.

WEST POINT GRAY

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

"FARMER by name and farmer by nature," said Lukes, not hiding his sneer. "You're bely-achin' like a weaning calf when you'd ought to be proud of wearing the uniform of your country."

"Uniform, hell!" exploded Zack Farmer. "Look at it! Gray instead o' blue, and you call it a uniform?"

"You'll never make a sojer, that's sure."

"I didn't 'list for this kind o' sojering." Tow-headed, with mild blue eyes in a round face, Farmer glowered. "What is it anyhow? Support arms, load in twelve motions, stick in your belly, fasten that collar, charge with the bayonet—arrgh! We been here four months at one blasted thing after another, over and over again. I didn't enlist for chilblained feet and a headache from a tar-bucket hat."

Sitting in front of the tent, private Lukes grinned a bulldog grin, squared his heavy shoulders, and admired the stout shanks below his upthrust knees, as he prepared the proper retort to this blast from Zack Farmer.

Full summer had come to the Niagara frontier, between New York and Canada. The spring, here around fire-blackened Buffalo, where the army for the invasion of Canada was encamped, had been cold and stormy until the end of May. June turned fair and warmish. July promised better. But in this warm sunset, the heart of Farmer was full sore; so were his feet.

"You recruits," proclaimed Lukes, "have got to learn proper sojering 'fore you fight the British. Look at me, now. Anybody'd know me for a regular who's fought to save his country. When I get out next year, I'll likely go home a corporal, and you'll see more'n one gal back home break her neck turning to look when I go by."

Farmer gave the big fellow a sour look.

"You needn't make any cracks about Sally; she ain't promised to you yet," he said. "She allowed she'd wait to see me in a blue sojer coat and britches, same as you; and when I get back all rigged out from the war, she'll decide then."

He stared unhappily at the sunset. He could see Sally standing before him once again, slim, brown of hair, black of eye, her cheeks in a blaze. He could hear her excited voice ringing out again:

"I won't marry anybody but a soldier hero. Dolph Lukes is fighting for his country right now. Go get yourself a blue coat and britches, then talk to me!"

He recalled his own question. Would she wait? He would have to enlist for a year; it meant a hundred dollars and the uniform—if she would wait. And how her eyes had flamed at him then!

"Zach, you'll look fine in a uniform! You come back, a hero in your country's blue, and I'll choose between you and Dolph. Bring me your bloody bayonet, Zach; I'd just adore to have a bloody bayonet!"

Doggone such a girl! She was like all the rest, he thought glumly—het up and crazy over a uniform. There was a hundred dollars cash for him and her, and all she could talk about was a bloody bayonet. A lot she knew about bloody bayonets! But now Lukes was speaking again, and Farmer wakened to the sting of the words.

"Haw, haw! Sally won't see you wearing no blue; she'll think you're a militia man. She's seen me in the regulars' blue, the uniform of my country; and I cut a figure, you bet! I'm a real sojer. I'm a-saving that old blue outfit to wear back home."

Farmer grunted. "If I'd known there wasn't any blue cloth left for this new army, and we had to be trussed in Quaker gray from Philadelphy, I sure wouldn't have 'listed. But the rest of you got to wear it too."

"Oh, us old hands have our blues tucked away to go home in," said Lukes. He regarded his own sober gray uniform with a grimace. "Gen'ral Scott's idee is that the rank and file have got to be uniformed alike. He's hell for looks—allows sojers fight better when they're smart dressed and smart drilled."

"I'm sick o' being drilled like militia on a common," Farmer growled. "All this bayonet exercise—yah! I don't see much sojer glory in being butchered like venison. Nor use in it, neither. Did you ever work close quarters with the bayonet?"

"Many's the time, many's the time," and Lukes wagged his head as he bragged. "Cold steel don't scare me. All you do is stick the other feller first. You got to bury your steel clean to the socket."

"Suppose he sticks me first?"

"Then you don't go home to Sally," Lukes grinned. "Ain't much use, anyhow, for you to go home in that gray. I hear tell we'll maybe march tonight, and by the looks of the sky, your britches will be shrunk an inch shorter 'fore morning." He cocked an eye at the clouds massing in the sky. The sun was gone now, the night was closing down.

"I wisht I was home in any color coat and britches," blurted out Farmer. The other gave him a malicious glance.

"So you're 'fraid o' cold steel, huh? When we cross the Niagary and fight the British, you'll have plenty bayonet work! Them British are tremenjous on the bayonet. Why, they leave the flints out'n their guns to make themselves desp'rit! Shouldn't wonder if we was to

march on Fort Erie tonight and take it at bayonet point."

With a disgusted grunt, Zack Farmer hitched himself inside the tent and prepared for the night, or part of it. The word had passed around that they might have to march long before the dawn.

THREE thousand men here in all: old files, recruits, a thin sprinkling of Indians, militia, under Major General Jacob Brown. Scott and Ripley commanded the two regular brigades, and this new-made general, Winfield Scott, was a terrier for fuss and feathers. He had turned into English a French book on drilling and had set everyone to handling arms and maching by the book. Full regimentals, rain or shine.

Zach Farmer laid aside his uniform disdainfully. Gray! The quartermaster department had no blue cloth for this new army, nothing but homespun gray. Where was the glory in fighting for your country in Quaker gray, even if you wore a leather hat with a pompom on it and a choke collar to keep your chin up?

Sojering was not popular anyhow, he reflected. Funny how the girls were all for it. The war begun in 1812 with the British had gone badly; two years of lickings on land, so far; merchants made poor by the blockade of the ports; the troops on the northern border whipped and captured. And now, if the British were not driven from the Niagara frontier, they would hold the Great Lakes and march on into the settlements. Buffalo had already been sacked. March tonight rain or shine, eh? On this unpleasant prospect, Farmer fell asleep.

With midnight he was routed out, and groaned to find a drizzle falling. He and Lukes fell in. The First Brigade was presently swinging off along the road through the woods, back of Buffalo, and heading for the Niagara River outlet of Lake Erie. It was the second of July, 1814.

The drizzle of rain made the darkness all the thicker. Tramp, tramp, clink, clink; Farmer listened to the voices. Lukes was bragging again.

"We're aiming to take Fort Erie with the bayonet, sure. That's my weapon, eighteen inches o' steel. Charge bayonets! That beats mess call for me, any day. I like to hear the steel click just 'fore I get in the first stab."

Big blowhard, thought Farmer; probably never was in a bayonet scrap yet.

"You make biggety talk, all right," grunted Jed Moss. He was Farmer's other file mate. "I guess you never traded stabs except in practice. The officers say that 'Charge bayonets' don't mean the steel gets crossed for stabbing. Bayonets are to make a show with. T'other side most always runs away, with the bayonets after 'em."

Farmer grinned to himself as he slogged along. Lukes only vaunted the more.

"Not when the enemy's up above you, or behind a wall you got to get over. By golly, soon's my steel is good and bloodied, I'll send it home. We know somebody back home who wants it. Huh, Zack?"

Sally be darned! So she had handed Lukes the same song and dance about a bloody bayonet, had she? Farmer swore under his breath. He might have known as much.

Tramp, tramp, clink, clink. The woods began to open out. The air was damp with the lake, with the Niagara. Over yonder across the river lay Canada, with bastioned Fort Erie, with British cannon, muskets and bayonets waiting for callers. Over there everything was darkness and mystery, and deathly quiet.

Farmer felt very small, a tiny midget in the night; he had a curious dryness of the throat. The first brigade had seemed a tremendous thing, but all of

a sudden it was small and unimportant, by contrasted with the night and the damp smell and the drizzle of rain. The tar-bucket hat on his head weighed heavily. So this was sojering for one's country! To be lost in the night, stabbed in the dark, buried in homespun gray, while Dolph Lukes went swaggering home in his blue uniform!

Ah! Farmer ceased feeling sorry for himself all at once. Here was the river; boats, barges drawn up and waiting. The column stumbled into them and made a tremendous racket of brogans, muskets, oars. The farther shore was beyond sight. Farmer found General Scott here in the boat, in a full dress rig of boots and white britches under a blue coat with gilt buttons and epaulets, a cloak about his shoulders, a fine cocked hat on his head.

Halfway across, and Farmer shivered under his leather hat and heavy knapsack; the boats were almost touching, in single file. The oars splashed. The Canadian shore loomed vaguely. Morning was close at hand now. Fort Erie was close by, somewhere off to the left.

Warning fingers of fire streaked from the shore. Balls whistled, angry reports jarred the air. The boat surged in, and Scott leaped out to be first ashore for glory. Instead of shallows, he struck a hole and went under, to be hauled out half drowned.

Then the boats were all in along the landing. Farmer piled out with the rest. The militia and Indians scattered, whoops and musketry resounded, and the outpost of the enemy fled for the fort. It was ended, to Farmer's amazement.

"No fight at all," grumbled Lukes. "Nary a bloodied bayonet amongst us regulars! Steel's the thing—more certain than shootin' blind. Hark to them cannon from the fort! I bet we'll charge it with the bayonet soon's the light breaks."

But no. Deeper grew Zack Farmer's amazed disgust when he found that it was indeed ended. With only a major and less than two hundred men inside, the fort yielded. And hardly a shot fired, only four men killed! So this was war, eh?

TALK grew throughout the day. Scouts came in. Three thousand British regulars and royal militia were holding the way downriver. Tomorrow would be Independence Day; a gunpowder celebration, you bet!

Evening retreat, everybody on parade, and then Zack Farmer sat watching Lukes hone his bayonet with a piece of whetstone. Clink, scrape, rub, rub; Lukes tested the edge and point with thumb and finger, and slit a sheet of paper for test. He gave Farmer a grin.

"I was savin' this to write Sally, but I'll send along the two halves with the bloodied steel. Yep, Zack, three thousand bayonets down at the Chippewa. We got only two thousand; you can't count in them militia. That means you and me got to kill two or three men apiece, to make up the lack. Haw, haw! You look like a sick cat!"

"I been pestered enough by you," broke out Farmer. "I don't believe you ever bloodied a bayonet, except that time you stole a beef. I'll go as far as you do."

"Fair enough. I can tell Sally that the first time a Britisher aimed a stab, you set down on your hind end and cried calf." He plucked a sorrel hair from his head, and squinted as he applied the bayonet edge to it. "Nope. Ain't quite sharp enough yet."

Farmer made no response. He was too out of sorts with the world and would not trust himself to speak. Sixteen mile to the Chippewa—that meant footwork tomorrow. He got out his grease and went to work on his feet.

A wise precaution. The Fourth broke bright and warm, and the brigade led

off to find the enemy.

Zack Farmer scarcely exchanged a word with anyone; he was sweating, intent on his hurting feet, and under his breath indulged in hearty curses at sight of the general. Upon a prancing horse, General Scott was a brave figure, all shining again in his white britches and blue coat and glittering epaulets. The only glitter of the gray rank and file came from the fixed bayonets.

Farmer cursed his feet anew. Tramp, tramp—a hell of a road to glory, with tar-bucket hat and choke collar and knapsack, eleven-pound musket with bayonet, all under a hot sun. Tight coat, tight belts, hot britches, heavy blistering shoes, ca'tridge box weighted with powder and lead slapping your rump as you trudged. But Sally wouldn't be interested in all that. No, she would want to know how many enemies her sojer boy had killed or captured—arrgh!

The bayonets glittered in line, the hat pompoms nodded, messware jingled, cartridge boxes slapped, belts squeaked, Farmer coughed and spat in the dust. An aide came galloping back. "The enemy in sight! The general orders front of platoons!" But the enemy ran away, tearing up the bridges over the creeks as he went.

A day of slow slogging, of panting double-quick, of bridge building in the heat and mud. Long range shooting now and then, like militia in a Fourth of July sham battle. The sun sank upon camp made behind a brushy creek, two miles short of the Chippewa. The rest of the army was coming on.

Farmer sat greasing his blistered feet. He had looked forward to the letter he would write Sally about a battle, but foot-greasing and bridge building would not give her much of a thrill. Lukes was honing his infernal bayonet again, and caught the look of sharp distaste Farmer flung at the thing. He grinned.

"You'd better be sharpening up, Zack. We got a bloody day tomorrow, you bet. Them British just tolled us on today, and they're waiting t'other side the Chippewa in a thundering big blockhouse with cannon inside and out. You and me got to stab a way through them batteries and into that fort."

"No sense in running at walls and cannon when we got guns ourselves to shoot with," snapped Farmer.

"That shows you ain't a sojer. Cold steel's the test of a sojer. Anybody can stand off and waste powder, but cold steel don't waste. You got to guard your guts and stick the other feller in his'n. Give or take."

Farmer rubbed away at his feet. This bayonet talk made his stomach crawl, and Dolph Lukes knew it.

THE night passed. Drum and fife sounded reveille. The plain ahead, between the creek and the yonder Chippewa seemed all empty in the morning sunshine.

And no fighting, apparently; the orders were to dress for review. Assembly sounded and Farmer fell in, with a growl of oaths. This did not look like any hurry-up fight, a quick charge at the fort before everybody got killed. "Forward, march!" and the column headed for the bridge across the creek.

Then, off to the north, a cloud of dust stirred. Here came General Brown and his aides, full pelt, galloping along with a shout to Scott as he passed. "They're coming! You'll have a fight!"

Farmer thrilled to a glint of color, a long, solid line of red appearing under the dust cloud, sweeping across the plain. British at last, redcoats at last! Infantry there, artillery at the gallop.

"Danged if they ain't running the wrong way!" The voice of Lukes sounded slightly off-tone. "We'll have to let 'em through and get on their backs—"

"At the double—march!"

The order snapped along. It was a race for the bridge now. To the west of

the little plain, the woods began to smoke, a rattle of musketry sounded. It was a fight and no mistake. The militia and Indians were there; Farmer could hear the distant whoops. The British line had halted. The cannon had halted, wheeled about, were pointed at the bridge.

Suddenly, to his amazement, Farmer realized how close those cannon were. He could see the poised linstocks, the scarlet coats, the shirtsleeves of the cannoneers. His mouth became dry. Those cannon were pointing at him, all of them! Well, it looked that way, anyhow. Zack Farmer, sojer of his country, cut in two by a cannon ball—huh!

The officers were shouting. The men were leaning forward, working their legs hard, panting like horses. The first rank was at the bridge now. Thump, thump, clumpity clump, clumpity clump—the planks trembled, the bridge swayed.

Then a cry was repeated, and Farmer caught his breath in a gasp. The cannon were vomiting smoke. Farmer hunched his shoulders as something screamed, ducked in his head like a turtle. Balls of iron swished, grape pelted and whistled. Screams, sharp piercing cries. Men were down here and there.

"Close up! Close up!" Lukes was at his elbow, furtive-eyed, all brag departed. Farmer pounded on. Across the bridge now, off the noisy planks, and as the cannon roared again, he gratefully obliqued off to the left with the file. Curiously enough, he felt steadied, more comfortable, less frightened. This began to look like the kind of war he had heard about.

A yell, a cheer swept down the line. Major Towson's battery of two guns tore over the bridge and unlimbered. Had scarcely wheeled about with caissons to the rear and opened, when the guns opened up. The smoke billowed, rushing to meet the cloud from the British guns. The Towson gunners worked like madmen, banging away.

Line of battle, sure enough! Farmer was excited now, in a mad wild whirl, as he realized it—here was what he could write Sally, sure enough! The battalion was stretched out in a long double rank, he realized in astonishment; he must have been obeying orders mechanically, not hearing them. The other battalions must be somewhere, but he could not see them. The British line was coming forward.

"By gosh, there's a lot of 'em!" That was Lukes' piping wheeze, beside him. "We'd ought to've stayed t'other side the crick. Safer there—"

Lukes was sweated crimson, curious white blotches in his face, and his eyes were blinking under his leather hat. Muskets were up and leveled now. The jutting barrels of the rear rank men pressed Farmer's shoulders, parallel with his own musket. His squinting eyes glimpsed a maze of red out there beyond his bayonet-point.

"FIRE!" He heard that shrill yelp, all right. A shock drove his shoulder back; his hat jumped against the chin strap. Then, from out across the gushing smoke, came an astounding thunderclap. The red line was swallowed up in smoke; those British muskets had gone off as one.

To right and left, wild cries. Swish, thud! Men were falling out of the ranks. Orders came thick and fast. "Close up! Fire at will!" And others: "By the right flank, double quick—halt! Front! Fire!"

What to fire at, in the smoke that was ever gushed afresh? Farmer loaded and fired with the rest. At every instant he expected to be hit, to feel the torment of agony in him, but nothing happened. Why, they couldn't hit him! Lead stormed in to right and left. Cheers were ringing up. Now and again he glimpsed the red massed line as it spouted smoke and flame. They were close now, a scant seventy paces away. So

this was real battle, real sojering; stand up to be knocked down!

"They ain't running, Dolph!" Farmer heard his own voice as he reloaded.

"Bayonet distance pretty quick," panted Lukes. "Get shot or be stuck, huh? Knowed you'd be scairt. You can hide behind me—"

They fired again, almost together. The red line seemed closer. "Cease firing!" The harshly bawled order ran along the line. In the lull as the smoke drifted, Farmer sighted General Scott coming along the line at a gallop. Two gray lines now, two battalions forming a wide angle, with that red line at the base. Scott's voice rang out as he spurred.

"They say we're good at long shots, and can't stand the cold steel! Give them the lie—charge!"

A furious roll of drums rattled up. The bayonets sprang forward to a glistening row. The ranks swung in, ran yelling, bodies bent and knees high, tall hats bobbing. Farmer was running with the others. He could do nothing else, for the men behind trod on his heels and shoved him on.

His feet hurt again. His musket was gripped under his arm; his knees wabbled, he strained as though clumping uphill or through new-ploughed ground. His sweat-bleared vision caught the British line standing stanch, bristling muskets leveled, about to fire. No getting out of it, by thunder!

As he pounded on, he cursed Sally for having got him into this. A spurt of smoke—the British were firing. Bayonets and sweating faces behind them vanished in a belch of smoke. Balls swished around like bursting hail. The line spread out. Men were falling. Farmer stumbled and found himself halted.

"Zack! Don't leave me!"

It was Lukes, down flat on his belly, his fist gripping the trousers leg of Farmer. The rear rank surged past. Farmer stared down.

"Dolph, you hurt? What is it?"

"Mortal bad."

Farmer stooped. "Where are you hit?"

"I dunno; I'm dying, Zack. Bleedin' to death. You wouldn't leave me here—"

"Leggo my leg! I don't see any blood—"

"Bury me in my blue coat, Zack," panted Lukes. "Tell Sally I died a-charging."

Farmer straightened up at a wild burst of cheers. The smoke was gone. The men in gray were prancing, capering, waving their hats by the chin straps. The red line was gone, scattered, spread out in a run for the Chippewa, and red shapes littered the ground behind them.

Lukes came to one elbow, and suddenly scrambled up.

"We licked 'em! Come on, take after 'em! That's what cold steel does!"

"Thought you were dying!" grunted Farmer.

"So did I. Guess it was the wind of a cannon ball that knocked me down. Come on, come on!" Lukes was all afire now. "We can get in a few stabs yet, if they stand!"

Farmer turned on him angrily. "Damn you, you kept me here, a-holt of my leg!"

"Haw, haw! Couldn't let you get ahead o' me, could I? Didn't take much to stop you, neither," and Lukes winked. Then he lumbered forward with a yell. "Hooray, boys! Cold steel and bloody bayonets! After 'em!"

The British did not pause. They were in full retreat, heading for the bridge over the Chippewa. Farmer checked himself; officers were bawling, the ranks were being formed up again. Wheezing, blaring, bragging, Lukes fell in beside him.

There was no pursuit; the sun was westering fast. General Scott, on his wearied horse, addressed the ranks exultantly:

"We've made a new anniversary . . . occasion when the American regulars defeated British regulars in pitched battle

. . . decided by the bayonet, the favorite British weapon—"

Farmer gawked at it all, scarcely listened. Everyone was tired out, cartridge boxes were empty, and the brigade bivouacked in the dusk, off the bloody furrowed field. Squads with lanterns gathered the dead and wounded, the surgeons fell to work; there was screaming near and far, and low sobbing groans lifted on the darkness.

"It wan't no great shakes as a battle," declared Dolph Lukes. "Three hundred of us dead and wounded, four or five hundred of them. If we could have druv home the bayonet not a one would have got away."

"If you hadn't played possum you'd have killed them all, huh?" snapped Farmer.

Lukes puffed out his cheeks. "I told you a cannonball knocked me over with its wind! Don't you go to saying I was afeared, you danged little runt!"

"You made a fool of me." Farmer faced him bitterly, hotly accusing. He caught that same queer look in the face of Lukes, and suddenly he knew the truth. Now that he was really stirred up, really riled, this hulking bully was afraid of him. "You held to my leg. That's a fine story to take back home!"

Lukes grinned, evaded the issue. "Sally will know I grabbed you to save your life, you bet! Why, you wouldn't have lasted one stab if you'd gone on without me to fend for you!"

It ended there, wearily enough. Not even the cries of the wounded could banish sleep this night. But Zack Farmer remembered that queer look. He knew the truth now.

THROUGH the days that followed, he remembered it more than once, but he held his peace. He was not much of a talker; slow to reach action's point, he endured greatly. He endured now. Lukes was swaggering again, bullying him, misconstruing his silence. Farmer by name and farmer by nature, said Lukes, and prated how Zach had stood like a tied calf while the others charged.

Then it burst out, of a late afternoon in camp.

The brigade had taken the advance again along the Niagara, the rest of the army to follow. The British were gathered, by rumor, at the mouth of the Niagara; no one knew. No one knew anything for sure, least of all, the ranks. The ranks obeyed orders and each man fought his own fight. Jed Moss knew more than anyone else, for he had been all through this country once with a trader's pack on his back.

It came to a head that afternoon. Lukes went a word too far.

"You've badgered me enough," said Farmer. Something hot and scalding rose in his throat and choked his voice. Lukes laughed.

"Oh, yeah? You wait till I get this letter writ to Sally—"

Lukes staggered under the blow. He never recovered from the stagger, just kept going backward, stumbling, bawling, flailing the air. Farmer kept on hitting him, while a crowd gathered in delight. Lukes was no favorite.

Astonished, hurt, Lukes bellowed for help. The intent, resolute face of Farmer had changed; the mild blue eyes were afire. When the big fellow went down, Farmer leaped on him and straddled him, and glared down into his frightened eyes.

"When I got to start a thing, I aim to finish it," panted Farmer. "Now, you big calf, I'm tired of your brag. I'm tired of your bayonet gab too. Next battle we have, we go in shoulder to shoulder and take the flints out'n our muskets. Agree?"

"Pull him off, you fellers!" cried Lukes. "I ain't fool enough to charge or stand charge 'thout no flint in my gun!"

Jed Moss spoke for those around.

"You've done a sight o' big talkin'

about cold steel, Dolph. Now take the dare or else bawl calf, and we'll drum you out'n the company in a hurry. Speak up!"

There was a quick murmur of approval from the other men. Lukes strained a look around and then assented sulkily.

"Oh, all right! You fellers ought to see that I didn't want to hurt Zack. He ain't big enough for me to fight—"

"That's enough out o' you," snapped Farmer, getting up. "Come on, you big hulk! I'll be quick enough to hurt you, so light right in. Come on!"

Lukes, on one elbow, scowled at him. "What in tarnation are you all het up about? I ain't fighting no more. I'll take your dare, sure. I'm a cold steel sojer, and I'll prove it quick enough."

"You better had," said somebody with a laugh. "Leave him up, Zack! Don't pick on the poor feller."

The general laugh was halted by a ripple of shouts, a wave of voices, a sudden commotion everywhere. A clarion resounded on the late afternoon.

"Hey! By gum, we're moving!" "Nice time o' day to break camp for a march. Yep, we're off, all right."

"Fall in! Fall in!" Orders bawling, drums rolling. The sun was well down into the west. The late July day had been sultry enough, and was still warm as the brigade took hurriedly to the Queenstown road. Whither and why? Nobody knew, except Lukes, who was quickly himself again.

"Night attack on Queenstown, that's the idee!"

The cataract of the Niagara was only two miles away. The river was on the right, woods were on the left, hazy with dust in the sunset. Tramp, tramp, clink, clink; the great cataract could be heard and felt, with the sullen eternal thunder that knew no pause. It could be seen as the road curved in wide sweeps to follow the course of the river. The spray of it hung in the still hot air, the low sun made a rainbow in the spray; the brigade was marching for an arch of glory.

Jed Moss pointed. That smattering of buildings over toward the river was Bridgewater Mills, just above the falls. Seven miles to Queenstown, said Moss.

And now the cataract, squarely on the right. The arched bow of promise spanned the falls and the winding road. The column cheered with enthusiasm. There was a sight worth telling Sally about, thought Farmer as he peered and gawked at it: a story to beat a battle all hollow. Nothing much in a battle to tell about. Then the road bore through a wide strip of woods, and their view of the falls was cut off.

"Next we're coming to Lundy's Lane," declared Jed Moss as he tramped. "It's where a road strikes off from this trace and goes clear to the head of Lake Ontario. Church and a graveyard there, where the road climbs a ridge. I met a sight o' right nice folks when I was peddling through here."

Down the river and past the falls, the road broke from the woods and into another opening like a huge pasture, mellow with the sunset. Low murmurs ran along the files. Farmer caught his breath. There was the church steeple, sentineling the ridge above; but that ridge was fringed with red, extending in a crescent from the river road, along the ridge and on beyond.

Cannon there, commanding the fields and the road. Infantry in brave lines, flanking the road. Three thousand of them again, regulars and royal militia, with steel aglint and cannon flashing in the sunset. This was a sight, in the last sunshine of a July day, with the great cataract thundering like the steady rolling of distant drums, and its gorges echoing like the crashing volleys of small arms—a sight to be held in memory.

"Too big a hunk to swaller!" blatted Lukes. "Them above and us here below."

"Chance to bloody your bayonet," Jed

Moss jeered at him. "Danged if old Fuss and Feathers ain't a-goin' to fight!"

THE battalion had halted. General Scott and his staff, sitting their horses, surveyed the enemy. Aides began to scurry about with orders. The men in the ranks were breathing hard. Farmer felt his heart pounding, felt it hammering; his mouth went dry again. Beside him came the tight voice of Lukes.

"We're goin' to need them flints. Ain't fair to others, Zack, havin' two guns that won't shoot. Let's call it off."

"Bawling calf, are you?" snapped Farmer. Others turned, looked, laughed. Lukes crimsoned and straightened up.

"Not me, by gum! It's you and me and cold steel—"

Orders sounded. The battalion began to move, broke into the double. Smoke burst from the British battery on the ridge; here came the iron, whistling ball and screeching canister. Towson's two guns, wheeling into action in the plain near the main road, belched smoke at the battery above.

On they pounded, feet hammering hard. The red-coated infantry in front was within range; muskets were leveled, they volleyed all together. This much, Farmer saw and remembered. Then his own rank got the order. His musket jarred, and everything was curtained with sulphurous smoke.

Three hours of it, interminable; an incredible three hours of hell, through the sunset, on into the evening, into the night with the half-moon riding above the drifting powder-smoke. Cannon and musketry scattered lurid flashes, but the rockets of the British were terrible. They burst overhead, among the men, on the ground, cleaving the ranks with a shower of flame and iron.

Yet the ranks held firm. By the musket flashes to right and left, the other battalions were holding fast. Towson's battery was flaming like a lighthouse. The British guns on the ridges, in front of Lundy's Lane, were the worst of all, even more deadly than the rockets or the screaming musket-balls; they were cutting the battalion into shreds.

"Close up! Close up!" Farmer seemed to be hearing nothing else, a constant shout and mutter, as the rear rank men stepped forward to fill the gaps. Company was mingled with company; all was confusion now. A long quaver of cheers came in a wave. The other brigade of regulars had at last arrived. An officer came running.

"We're to fall back and make way, men. By the left flank, march!"

From the ridge howled down another deluge of canister. The balls ripped through the stumbling files. The ranks broke up; the men ran, crouched and smoke-blind, desperate, Farmer with the rest. He could scarcely see from his smarting eyes. He stumbled over bodies, lost touch with the others.

Then he tripped and went sprawling. Recovering his musket, he staggered up and found himself alone. No, not alone; someone was wheezing beside him, hunkering there at his knee.

"Thought you were hit." Lukes panted out the words. "Set down—safer. Rest a minute."

"Not here," said Farmer, peering. "We can find the company again."

"Hell! Ordered to fall back, ain't we? We've done enough. It's that danged battery. Ought to've charged with the bayonet and took it, 'fore it cut us all to bits."

"You'll miss out if you stay here," snapped Farmer. "I'm going to find the company."

"Let them fresh troops worry," growled Lukes. "We've fell back. You and me'll have to work that dare next battle—hell's bells! What's this?"

Tramp, tramp, and a rhythmic clink that caught the ear. The battle was still flaming on either side of the field, but here was a lull. The Towson guns were

cooling, the ridge battery was at pause likewise; the smoke cleared and Farmer had another glimpse of the field under the tawny moon.

Marching men—dusky double ranks of gray-clad men at swift pace, muskets on shoulder, bayonets fixed, as though on parade. And close, so close that Farmer could count the serried rows of nodding pompoms. The remnant of a regiment, but pressing forward with intent purpose—charging, by heaven!

"Come on, Dolph! There's our charge!"

"Huh! It ain't our battalion!" A bursting rocket limned Lukes' whitened, grimy face and startled eyes. Farmer whirled on him.

"Damn you, come on! Shoulder to shoulder, out with that flint—come on, you blasted coward, or I'll kick you on!"

Lukes came erect. "Out goes my flint. Here's my gun as proof: gimme yours."

"Here it is," and jerking out his flint. Farmer exchanged muskets.

A rocket burst almost directly overhead. Startled, Farmer swung around. His bayonet prodded Lukes, who let out one yell and went leaping.

"I'm a-goin', durn you!" he bleated, and Farmer followed him with a grin.

They merged with the battalion, shouldered into a file and caught step. Voices rustled at them with questions.

"You fellers—what you doin' with the 21st Infantry, huh?"

"Didn't aim to fall back, so we j'ined up with you," said Farmer. "Where bound?"

"Ordered to take that infernal battery up yonder. Three hundred of us—"

Farmer felt a cold chill at his heart, but there was no help for it now. Three hundred, to take two thousand troops? It was plain suicide.

The pace quickened. They were at the base of the ridge, were flanking the battery. Apparently their charge was unobserved. Spouting luridly, the guns hammered away at the field, veiling the gray ranks in a murk of drifted smoke that dimmed the sickly moon.

Up the slope, now, climbing for it. A rail fence appeared, halting the lines. The glow-worm matches of the cannoneers above were visible. Voices leaped out. Alarm cries sounded as the fence was scaled by the gray ranks. A sharp, frenzied cry burst from Lukes.

"Shoot, afore they swing them cannon on us! I'll show you—"

His musket jumped forward, flamed, exploded. Farmer swore at him lustily, and Lukes let out a panting response.

"Think I'm a fool? I had a spare flint, o' course—"

"Fire! Charge!" rapped the commands.

Nothing else for it now. The ranks drove on up the hill with bayonets leveled. Muskets blazed on all sides. Farmer felt the hot belches as he ran. Now the cannon appeared, the battery, the smoking muzzles swinging around, the cannoneers desperately working to blast away this menace of gray-clad men.

The ranks flooded up, bursting in upon the guns. A few muskets rippled out frantic fire. Gun crews fought with sabres, rammers, anything, as the bayonets swept in upon them.

To Farmer, it was mad chaos. The rammer of a gunner beat his weapon aside and rose for another blow; he saw the man's face set in a snarling grin. He leaped and lunged blindly; the gunner vanished. They had all vanished—on the run, what was left of them. The battery was taken, and cheers began to lift on all sides. Cheers that got a sudden hoarse response—a mass of red, coming on furiously at the double, the British infantry surging in to sweep away these momentary victors.

FARMER had one glimpse of those serried bayonet lines, as a volley gushed out and hid them. Balls whirred overhead. The gray ranks lined up and fired.

The red line drove in through the smoke; rockets burst in ghastly white and crimson, the bayonets glittered errantly, cold and sharp, in the feeble moonlight. Farmer braced himself for the shock as those bayonets surged like a wave.

A shock, a scramble, a wild hurlyburly of panting, gasping men all around. Zack Farmer wakened to sanity at the voice of Lukes, shrieking for quarter—Lukes, flat down, a British officer striking at him with a sword.

Farmer lunged in. The officer parried his attack; the sword slid in at him like a striking rattlesnake. Numbed with the parry, Farmer felt a stab of pain through arm and shoulder. Regardless, he shortened his musket and delivered a quick stab. The officer fell forward, dragging down the musket with him.

Desperately, Farmer wrenched his musket free and sprang around as a figure in red leaped for him. Another bayonet, here—click, parry, rasp—thrust! The red figure grunted and toppled over. Others behind him; insensate, Farmer hurled himself at them. The whole line was yelling like mad.

Hurray! Hoarse cheers rang out. Nobody left to stab at; the crest around the battery was cleared. Farmer rested his aching arms, forgot the dull hurt of pain in his shoulder; astonishment was in his brain. Alive, ready for more, actually sorry it was ended! Cold steel had no terrors for him now. For country and glory? Not much. For bare life. He looked at his bayonet, and his jaw fell. No bayonet there; only a red stub of broken steel.

At midnight, Lundy's Lane was in the past with Chippewa. In the early dawn, the remnants of the battalion were marching up the river road, where the great cataract boomed. Farmer, one arm bandaged and in a sling, musket in his other hand, came upon Dolph Lukes.

"Hello, Zack!" exclaimed Lukes. "You stood to the cold steel pretty well, if I do say. How'd you bust your bayonet?"

"Not by hollering for quarter, like you did," snapped Farmer. "What's that you're lugging along?"

"Sword. That officer's sword. After I held his leg so's you could stick your bayonet into him, I took his sword. I aim to give it to Sally—"

Lukes' words died out in a short gasp. Farmer had halted, and the look on his face was not pleasant. The splintered stub of his bayonet swung around, and Lukes shrank suddenly.

"Look out!" he yelped. "You crazy galoot—"

"Hand over that sword and do it quick," said Farmer.

Hastily, Lukes extended the blade. "Aw, hell, Zack," he exclaimed placatingly, "I didn't go to rile you up none—"

"You're a liar and a coward," Farmer said slowly. "I've a good notion to tell everybody in the company just what happened."

"Aw, shucks, Zack!" exclaimed the other. "You oughtn't to bear no hard feelin's. Looky here, tell you what I'll do. I'll give you that there old blue uniform o' mine, so's you can go home to Sally looking like a real sojer—"

"You and your blue coat and Sally and the whole bilin' of you, be damned," said Zack Farmer. "Gray's good enough for me, and if it ain't good enough for her, then she's welcome to you! Now drift along and shut your jaw and go pal up with somebody else. Me, I'm a sojer. Clear out!"

His bayonet-stub jerked, and Dolph Lukes departed.

NOTE: Order of the Adjutant General, 1816: In memory of the battle of Chippewa, July 5, 1814, and in honor to the gallant troops there engaged, the uniform of the cadet corps of the United States Military Academy shall be gray.

He staggered, but came on.

PHOTOGRAPHING A LION

A Fact Story

By JOHN TOOKER

SPARK PLUG, my hunting horse, was missing from the stables at Grand Canyon. He was originally a wild horse that had been born in the cedar covered hills twenty miles south, between Anita and Red Butte, Arizona. Ten years before, he had been trapped and captured along with several others, by the X. B. cow outfit. He was at the time a three-year old. I traded a gentle old brood mare for him, and the process of breaking began.

It was a long and tedious job. He was never mean, just elusive and hard to gentle. But I well knew that once he was well enured to bridle and saddle I had a horse made to order for my business. He was hard as nails and could follow a pack of lion dogs all day, going at full speed with safety over rough rocky country and down timber. He could live on native grass, even sage brush. Also, he was the only horse I ever saw that would willingly carry a lion.

This wonderful animal, however, had some bad habits and peculiarities of which he could not be broken. One of the most annoying and inconvenient of these was his desire, upon gaining his freedom, to return to his old range and birthplace. The droves of wild horses had long since left the range for the wilder Cataract Canyon country; nevertheless, Spark Plug would return to this old home of his, hoping to find friends, roam aimlessly about until I caught him or had some obliging cattle man or ranch hand do it for me.

During his absence at this particular time I put out an S. O. S. for him and in a few days was advised by Forest

Ranger Ira Hays that Spark Plug was running with his saddle horses near the Anita Ranger Station, nineteen miles south of the Grand Canyon. I advised the ranger that I would be down the following day.

Early the next morning I saddled up, taking my rifle and camera, and set out to bring Sparky back home. It was March, and about eight inches of snow lay at the Grand Canyon, as the Canyon rim is one of the highest ridges in Arizona. The further south I traveled the lower became the altitude and the lighter the snow.

It was a beautiful spring morning. I took no trail, just headed south through the timber. Three miles out I crossed the south boundary line of the Grand Canyon National Park and was reading the signs in the snow as the average man reads a newspaper. There were many deer, lynx, cat and coyote tracks. About ten miles out I struck the head of Rain Tank Canyon and took the trail down to the bottom of it.

It is a box canyon, having high rock walls on either side with caves therein. On the sides and top of some of these caves are drawings, some of sabre-toothed tigers, elephants; one weird figure appears to be a camel with two humps. These drawings puzzle science. They were, no doubt, made when these prehistoric animals inhabited this country and by a race of people of which there is no definite trace.

I was puzzling over these things when I saw several lion tracks that crossed the canyon. They all could have been made by the same lion; I was not sure. I had no dogs with me and was not much interested. As I emerged from this box canyon into the more level country I observed a lynx scratching at the base of a pine tree some distance away. I drew the rifle from the scabbard and tried to get a shot, but he saw me and slipped into the thick cedars.

My curiosity was aroused, however. I dismounted and found that there was a small deer buried at the base of that tree, carefully covered with pine needles. This, I knew, was not the work of a lynx. A lion had killed and buried the deer. The lynx had happened along and his keen nose told him that beneath those pine needles lay a meal of sweet, juicy venison. He was in the act of securing his prize when I interfered.

There were lion and deer tracks everywhere. I examined the kill and the tracks. There was frost in the tracks and everything indicated that the deer had been killed early on the evening before. The beast had been content to draw the blood from the little animal and wait until later for the meat. The blood is sufficient sustenance for many hours. None of the carcass had been eaten.

I STUDIED the lay of the land. There, about twenty or thirty feet north of the kill, was a good hiding place. The lion had gone south and would return the same way. The wind at this season usually blows from the south and today was no exception. What a chance for a picture, if he would only return in daylight! If he came at all it would either be that very evening or the next. But if, on his return, he should find other deer enroute he would kill one and might never come back. I decided to take a chance and lay for him.

It was less than a mile from the Anita Ranger Station. I rode over to it where I found Spark Plug in the corral and a note fastened to the door saying that the ranger was gone and would be away for several days. There being plenty of feed and water in the corral, I left both horses, took the camera and rifle, and walked back to my find.

The blind or hiding place was almost perfect, but I rearranged it some to suit myself, and sat down. I waited the rest of the day until dark, but nothing hap-

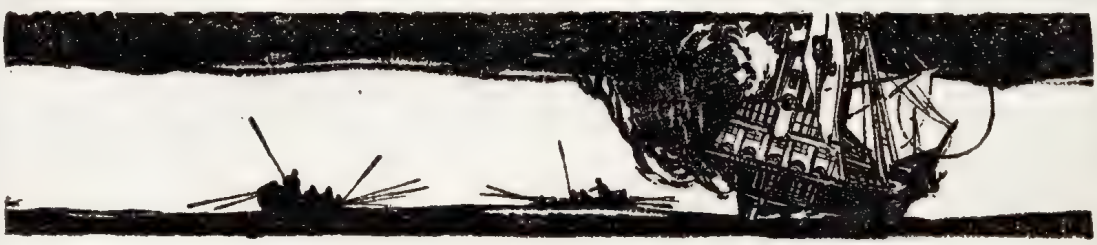
pened. I found food and a good bed in the ranger station, got a good night's rest and was back on the spot at daylight. I was a little surprised and quite happy to discover that the lion had not been back during the night. There, at least, lay some hope. He would come some time today or not again.

The day dragged on slowly. It was warm and the snow was melting fast. The ground exposed to the warm sunshine was already bare in spots. Evening drew near and the shadows became longer and the light poorer. I had just about given up getting my picture when I observed a stealthy movement across the little opening. As last the lion was coming! Then he walked boldly out, never stopping until he reached the carcass. He was a very large male lion, in perfect physical condition.

I had the camera set, but I had been waiting so long that my muscles had become stiffened. I feared that I should move clumsily before snapping the picture, and thereby attract the lion's attention too soon. In such case, all my waiting might be in vain.

The lion had begun uncovering the deer when I found that I must move just a little. He saw the movement, but I doubt if he knew what it was. It is possible he thought me some animal trying to steal his meal. He crouched, ears back, every muscle tense, growling menacingly. The camera clicked and caught him prepared for the charge of his enemy.

I dropped the camera and grasped the rifle that lay ready at my side. As he came around the tree I fired. The bullet struck just back of the left shoulder. He staggered, but came on. As he made the last spring that would carry him on to his tormentor the little rifle spoke again. The lion seemed to crumple in the air and fell dead on the edge of the blind.



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DUELLISTS' PARADE

A Fact Story

by MEIGS O. FROST

TALK was growing edgy in Maspero's Coffee House that night in New Orleans. The year was 1802. Gentlemen, old and young, spoke quite passionately then of things like nationality and politics and opera and the beauty and charm of the ladies they knew.

They spoke quite simply, though, of things like honor and dignity, as matters not open to argument. They had a Code of Honor which took care of affairs like that. It was rigid as a steel pistol-barrel in some respects, elastic in others. But on one point it was absolute. Under certain conditions a man must have the courage to fight with deadly weapons, or stand disgraced.

They laced their discussions at Maspero's then with the brandy of France or the rum of the West Indies. Both were excellent, but not conducive to calm.

So it was understandable to all present when voices rose above a certain pitch at the table where Cadet Dugas sat with Antoine Des Moulins, rich young planter. Also it was understandable when the voices sank to a level ominously calm and formal. Both young gentlemen rose, bowed formally, and departed by different doors.

"They had a difficulty and they agreed to settle it," was the simple explanation.

They met next morning at the basin of the old Marigny Canal. The two young gentlemen, who had spent part of the night writing letters of farewell, ar-

ranging their earthly affairs, stood apart, very erect, very silent, while their seconds huddled. Then to each strode his second, frowning.

"It is stupid beyond words," was the message. "But you have agreed to fight with pistols, and only one pistol has been brought."

Cadet Dugas, as befitted a military man, made instant decision.

"Toss a coin," he ordered, "if it is agreeable to my opponent. The winner gets the first three shots. If the loser survives, he gets the next three shots."

Antoine des Moulins agreed. His second produced a coin, spun it high in air, and Cadet Dugas' second called: "Heads!" It fell tails. One second watching, the other rammed powder, bullet and patch into the muzzle-loading flintlock smooth-bore pistol, primed it, and cocked it. They paced off ten paces, thirty feet.

"Gentlemen, take your places," sounded the order.

Cadet Dugas walked to the spot his second indicated, and stood rigid as on parade, facing his enemy. The pistol was handed to Antoine des Moulins. He raised it, waiting for the order.

"One. Two. Three. Fire!"

Finger pressed trigger. Flint clashed on steel. But no sparks flew. Antoine des Moulins had only two shots left. Under the Code of Honor, a misfire was a shot.

They drew the charge, reloaded the pistol, primed and cocked it again. Again they went through the routine. And for the second time the pistol failed to fire.

Cadet Dugas was annoyed. His face set in lines of supreme disgust. He did an unprecedented thing.

"*Frote zongues a vous, sur le pierre! Il va parti coup ci la!*" he called out to the seconds in Louisiana's colloquial French.

"Scratch on that flint with your thumb-nail! Then it'll be sure to shoot!" He frowned deeply at a new thought. Proof of courage under the Code of Honor demanded that no possible advantage be taken of an opponent. Obviously if Antoine des Moulins didn't know enough about a pistol to scratch the flint with his thumb-nail when it misfired, he was no pistol expert.

"I think ten paces is too far for him," said Cadet Dugas. "Why not give him a better chance!"

Deliberately he advanced five paces toward his opponent, stood facing the pistol muzzle at fifteen feet.

And for the third time Antoine des Moulins lost his shot as the pistol failed to fire.

He shrugged his shoulders. He handed the pistol to his second. He straightened and stood there, silent, facing death at the hands of a man who had proved his own courage beyond any doubt. And three times more that pistol failed to fire!

Their seconds came forward, pleading that the two youths become reconciled. Both had proved their courage. Evidently *Le Bon Dieu* didn't want either to die that day. Honor had been satisfied with strictest formality under the Code.

The two young duellists looked at each other. Suddenly they both smiled. They embraced. Friends again, they returned to town and celebrated with New Orleans' ancient "*dejeuner a la fourchette*", the breakfast of the fork that lasts three hours.

That is the earliest of the recorded duels of New Orleans, and for a long time it was the peak of the city's fantastic personal combats under the Code. But others followed it, equally fantastic, far more deadly.

DESPITE laws against duelling, New Orleans was the scene of countless duels from the dawn of the nineteenth century into the 1880s. As many as five duels a day are recorded.

The newspapers of the time gave few

details. When they did print stories of duels, those stories were "written under wraps", as today's reporters would phase it. Often only first names and the initials of the last names were used. Ancient court records, private letters and manuscripts of reminiscences, in the main, have preserved such vivid fragments as have outlasted human memories.

New Orleans, which had been French from the founding in 1718 until 1769, then Spanish until 1803, then French for twenty days and American thereafter, through the Louisiana Purchase of President Thomas Jefferson from Napoleon Bonaparte, seems to have had no laws against duelling throughout the French and Spanish regime, though duelling was outlawed officially in France and Spain.

But hot French and Spanish blood, adventurous American blood, the absolute authority of slave ownership, the subtropical climate, the school of thought through the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, bred duels in New Orleans as the swamps outside the city bred mosquitoes.

It is a strange duellists' parade that begins with Cadet Dugas and Antoine des Moulins.

William Clay Cole Claiborne of Virginia was appointed by President Thomas Jefferson as first American territorial governor of Louisiana, following the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. He was, by the way, the last governor of an American state to belt on his sword and go forth to battle against a foreign enemy invading his state, when he fought side by side with General Andrew Jackson against the British at the Battle of New Orleans, January 8, 1815. He was a popular hero then in New Orleans. But when he first landed in New Orleans to rule for the United States of America, he was popular as the New Deal in Wall Street.

French Louisianans distrusted Spanish Louisianans, but both joined in hating American Louisianans, who were divided into hot political fractions themselves. Duelling bloomed.

In the New Orleans Gazette, Feb. 8, 1805, was printed this strange contribution:

> A DREAM—Methought it was a night in the month of December, A.D., 1804. All in the city were hushed and still. I was passing near the government house. Suddenly the sound of music burst from the hall. I listened. The guests were dancing. Surprised, I advanced to the sentinel who was pacing with slow and measured steps before the building. From him I also learned the fact. His arms glittered in the moonbeam. At this moment the convent bell sounded. A noise, like rushing (rustling?) silk, was near. I turned my head; a female figure stood before me. She was tall and graceful, displaying a perfect symmetry of features. Her countenance was mild and beautiful, but shadowed with sorrow. I gazed upon her beautiful face. At that moment a new strain of music sounded; the shouts of the guests grew louder; they seemed to pierce her soul. She clasped her hands in agony, and turned her eyes to heaven. Then, meek, resigned, sorrowful and lovely, she bent her willing steps toward the graves of Louisiana. —FIDELIS.

It sounds today like the hifaluting language of a sophomore of 1804. If there was political poison in it, it has evaporated with the years. No man knows today the insult to a gentleman of honor in those few fancy words. But they stood Governor Claiborne's Louisiana administration on its ear!

Investigation showed that a young Louisiana lawyer, Robert Sterry of New Orleans, of American blood, was "Fidelis."

A council of state was summoned. After formal debate it was decided that Governor Claiborne, because of his official position, could not challenge Sterry to a duel.

Major Micajah G. Lewis, young, handsome, brilliant, brother-in-law and secretary to Govenor Claiborne, within a week after that effusion by "Fidelis" was printed, challenged Sterry to a duel. Sterry accepted. They met next day with

pistols at a distance of thirty feet.

Under the Code of Honor, if your pistol was discharged accidentally after you had taken your position, and your seconds had handed you the loaded weapon, it counted as a shot at your enemy. It was your hard luck; you must stand and receive his fire.

Lewis and Sterry stood face to face, ten paces apart, pistols in hand. The alloted second called out: "One. Two. Three. Fire!" Before Lewis could raise his pistol to level it at Sterry, his finger pressed the trigger; the ball ploughed the ground halfway between them.

The Code of Honor gave Sterry the right to shoot Lewis where he stood. But the young lawyer turned his back on his challenger, and fired into the air. The seconds pleaded for a reconciliation. Young Major Lewis was obdurate. He demanded that the pistols be reloaded and they continue the duel.

"As he wishes," said Robert Sterry.

Again they faced each other with loaded weapons; again the command sounded. Lewis' ball whistled past Sterry's ear. Lewis stoqd quite still.

"I believe—" he began; then he fell to the ground. He was dead, shot through the heart.

On his tombstone in St. Louis Cemetery Number One, oldest in New Orleans, are carved the words: "Killed in a Duel."

BUT Governor Claiborne could fight for himself. In June, 1807, a little more than two years after his brother-in-law was killed fighting his political battles. Claiborne was in a hot fight with Daniel Clark, Louisiana's first delegate to the Continental Congress. Clark was a rich merchant and land speculator, a jovial, belligerent Irishman who lived with great gusto. As they said then, "The lie was passed." Clark challenged Claiborne. Governor Claiborne accepted the challenge.

Consider for a moment the tumult in a modern American newspaper, the headlines, the art layouts, the columns of type, if they had an exclusive story of a pistol duel between the governor of the old home state and that state's member of congress!

Here is the way *Le Moniteur*, official French language newspaper of New Orleans, covered the Claiborne-Clark duel in its issue of June 13, 1807:

> Last Monday a duel took place between His Excellency, Governor Claiborne, and Hon. Daniel Clark, our delegate in Congress. They left the city last week and repaired beyond Iberville on the title-disputed territory. They m t last Monday, and the governor received at the first fire his adversary's ball in the right thigh. He returned to the city last Tuesday night, and is as well as can be expected. Mr. John W. Gurley attended the governor and Mr. Richard R. Keene accompanied Mr. Clark. We shall give the particulars of this affair for the satisfaction of our readers as soon as we shall be able to procure them.

That was all *Le Moniteur* ever printed of the duel. The promise made to its readers in the last line of the story was never kept. The combat, it is known, took place at the juncture of Bayou Manchac and the Mississippi river, some ten miles south of today's city of Baton Rouge. The coffee houses knew that politics was the cause of the duel. The exact insult was lost when the last man who knew it died. A private letter reveals that it was a month before Governor Claiborne could walk again.

NOW the Claiborne-Clark duel apparently was conducted along the classic lines of the Code of Honor. Others of the period were not. Vincent Nolte, who returned to the modern world in "Anthony Adverse" under his own name, after a century of obscurity, was a very real person who came to New Orleans in 1806. He was one of those incredible human beings to whom almost anything was likely to happen.

A German born in Leghorn, Italy, he was a merchant, a financier, and the author of one of the most enchanting autobiographies the libraries hold. He had traveled the world. He had hobnobbed impartially with Napoleon Bonaparte and tribes of American Indians. He had visited the Vatican by invitation to confer with the Pope. He had been financial adviser to Von Knebeck, the premier of Austria. He had lent money to the Marquis de Lafayette. He had built river flatboats at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

It was his shipload of cotton bales that General Andrew Jackson had confiscated and used experimentally to build his ramparts for the Battle of New Orleans in 1815, and when Nolte protested, Andy Jackson told him: "If you want to save your cotton, why not get a gun and fight for it?" So Nolte did, and left a record of the performance of some Louisiana Creole gentlemen at the battle that has their descendants gnashing their teeth yet. Also he left a record of how General Jackson horse-traded him out of much of the value of his cotton, that makes certain worshipers of Old Hickory crowd anybody for the teeth-gnashing record.

Vincent Nolte's own story of his "affair of honor" with Joseph Saul of New Orleans, cashier of the Louisiana Bank, is in his autobiography. A couple of weeks before they quarreled, explains Nolte, he "was mounting a fiery horse," that thrown, and "my head was severely wounded, my right arm broken at the elbow so that I have never been able wholly to straighten it since." Up from his bed after this mishap, he records that he met Joseph Saul on a New Orleans street, they quarreled hotly, and Saul knocked him down.

Nolte admits that, unwilling to enter a fist fight in his crippled condition, he ran. But Saul pursued him, knocked him down again, and mounting his prostrate form, banged his head against a curb until Nolte lost consciousness. Along came one Mr. Nott, friend of Vincent Nolte, hauled Saul off his victim, and challenged him to a duel. Saul accepted.

They fought with pistols. Saul was shot in the body. "The only thing that saved his life," writes Nolte, "was the silk bandage he had wound many times around his body, which deadened the force of the pistol ball.

This, if true, was in violation of the Code of Honor, and Nott's seconds should have detected it. Weeks later, considering himself now physically able to walk out on the Field of Honor, Vincent Nolte records that he sent his challenge to Joseph Saul. Nolte writes: "He wrote me that 'having fought once already over our late unpleasantness, I cannot gratify your unreasonable request'."

The element of comedy in this Nolte-Saul episode is entirely lacking in the affair of Faustin St. Amand of New Orleans, whose plantation the expanding city swallowed, and a man who survives in the record only as "an American slave-dealer from Kentucky." They quarreled; no man knows why.

Faustin St. Amand slapped the Kentuckian's face.

Only blood could wash out such an insult then. The Kentuckian challenged. St. Amand accepted, and set the conditions.

They were to cross the Mississippi River at Canal Street, and fight on the west bank where Algiers, a New Orleans suburb, stands today. They were to stand three feet apart, back to back, each with loaded, cocked pistol, beside an open grave. At the word they were to wheel and fire. The winner would supervise the burial of the loser. It was Suicide Club stuff, but the unnamed Kentuckian was game.

Their seconds stood beside them. A goggle-eyed Negro who had dug the grave leaned on his spade and watched. The command: "Fire" sounded. Faus-

tin St. Amand was a split-second faster than the Kentuckian. He shot his enemy through the heart. They buried him there. As far as any record reveals, he sleeps there yet, by the Algiers-Canal Street ferry landing, his grave forgotten.

IN 1818 Louisiana passed an anti-duelling law. It was a beautiful gesture. Twenty-two years passed before it was even invoked.

Paul Pruet and H. Trouette, two New Orleans gentlemen of some means, who played occasionally with politics, quarreled violently over some point lost in the mist of nearly a century. They met June 26, 1840, on Bayou Road, New Orleans, in *"un duel a la mort"* by mutual agreement—a duel to the death. Pruet's seconds were Lalouette, a famous fencing-master, and a man named Perez of an ancient Spanish family. Trouette's seconds were Monsieur Crozat, recorder of births and deaths for the Parish of Orleans, and Monsieur Latour, "a popular politician and wag." That was no spot for waggishness. A crowd of friends attended, tense and grim.

The duellists had agreed in advance to stand back to back, five paces (fifteen feet) apart, a loaded, cocked pistol in each hand.

At the command: "Fire!" they were to wheel, and each fire his first shot with the pistol in his right hand. Each could use his second pistol any time thereafter he wished.

The command to fire rang out. Both men wheeled and fired with their right-hand pistols. Incredibly at that distance, both missed. Each dropped his right-hand pistol; started shifting his remaining pistol from left to right hand. Those hair-trigger duelling pistols took accurate handling. Shifting hands, Paul Pruet by accident fired his second pistol into the ground.

There stood Trouette only fifteen feet away, a loaded, cocked pistol in his right hand, leveling it at his enemy. Under the Code of Honor he had full and complete right to shoot. The accident was Pruet's hard luck; that was all.

But from passionate partisans of Pruet amid the spectators rose the cry: "Don't fire! This is assassination!"

On the sidelines, halfway between the two combatants, stood Monsieur Crozat, second to Trouette, a cocked pistol in each hand, to enforce his authority to take part in the duel if a fighting second was required, as frequently happened. He glared at the crowd from which the cries had come.

"Who said this is an assassination?" demanded Monsieur Crozat. "I have two pistols here. One is at the service of anyone who tries to interrupt this affair."

No man took up the challenge.

Crozat turned to Trouette, his principal.

"You have the right to fire. Fire!" he said.

That moment, Paul Pruet signed his own death warrant. He looked sneeringly at Trouette, smote his breast with his clenched fist.

"Fire," he said, scornfully.

Trouette fired. Pruet fell, shot through the chest. In five minutes he was dead.

Monsieur Crozat again glared at the crowd of spectators.

"*Messieurs,*" he said, "the blood of this man is on your heads. Had you craved our generosity, we would have spared him. Instead of that, you provoked us." New Orleans rocked with the tale. Attorney-General Mazureau charged H. Trouette with violating the anti-duelling law of 1818. Pierre Soule volunteered to assist in the prosecution. Trouette retained Cyprien Dufour, M. M. Cohen and Charles Bienvenu to defend him. The court of Judge Canonge was packed to its doors; crowds filled the streets outside. Oratory of the time spouted like fountains.

Laughter rocked the court as Attorney-General Mazureau recalled the time the Marquis de Chatelet of France challenged Mirabeau and the caustic French leader wrote his challenger:

> Monsieur le Marquis, it would be very unfair for a man of sense like me to be killed by a fool like you. I have the honor to be, with highest consideration, MIRABEAU.

Mazureau spoke six hours.

The jury was out eighteen hours. Then it returned a verdict of "Not Guilty." Crowded courtroom, crowded street and square outside the doors, cheered madly for half an hour.

IN 1845 a new Louisiana anti-duelling law was passed. The ink on it was hardly dry when Dr. Thomas and Monsieur Lebeau clashed in the Orleans ballroom, scene of the notorious Quadroon Balls, where the quadroon beauties annually paraded and men selected their mistresses as casually as their wives shopped for their frocks. It is a convent for Negress nuns today, on Orleans Street, just back on the ancient Cathedral of St. Louis.

E. Durel and E. Cazeres were selected as seconds. A pair of Creole *"colichemards"* were produced; long, needle-pointed duelling rapiers with triangular grooved blades.

A space was cleared in the middle of the ball-room floor, the duellists stripped off coats and waistcoats, and steel rang on steel. Dr. Thomas fell, "badly wounded," says a legal deposition. Dr. Tricou, summoned to attend him, saved his life.

District Attorney Laurent J. Sigur charged them all with violating the new anti-duelling law. Trial was set before Judge McHenry of the Criminal Court. The duellists retained John Grymes as defense counsel.

He was another incredible figure of the period, a duelling, hard-drinking, heavy-gambling lawyer. He had successfully defended Jean Lafitte, buccaneer of Barataria, against a charge of piracy. His fee was twenty thousand dollars gold.

Lafitte invited him to spend a month as his guest at his stronghold on Grande Terre, a sea island off the Louisiana coast. At the end of four weeks of historic revelry, Lafitte gave him a boat and a crew to take him back to New Orleans, with his twenty thousands dollars gold in canvas sacks. They skirted the Louisiana coast eastward; started up the Mississippi River. The convivial Grymes stopped over at many a plantation along the way. Poker, dice and drinking enlivened the visits. Grymes landed in New Orleans penniless.

District Attorney Sigur summoned Dr. Tricou as a witness for the state. Dr. Tricou defied state and court with: "It is contrary to my duty to divulge professional secrets," refused to testify, and got away with it. John Grymes made an eloquent plea to the jury that a gentleman must fight under insult or stand the unbearable brand of coward. The jury stayed out thirty minutes. They came back in hopeless disagreement. The whole case was dropped. Duelling went merrily on.

That same year, 1845, a group of young men of Louisiana's finest, richest families, known as "The Roistering Blades," were making merry. Two of them were Ferdinand Gayarre, of the famous Louisiana historian's family, and Charles Patton, brilliant young lawyer. No man heard the words that caused it, but suddenly Gayarre slapped Patton in the face. And they had been like brothers.

All of the group knew that meant death for Gayarre. Patton's skill with sword and pistol was uncanny.

Charles Patton rose, the mark of the slap red on his cheek. He drew a slow, deep breath. He did not look at Ferdi-

nand Gayarre, who stood tense and white, awaiting the fatal words: "My seconds will call on you, sir." He looked at the group about them, instead.

"Come here," he said to that group. "Closer."

They gathered about him.

"Gentlemen," said Charles Patton, "you have seen Ferdinand Gayarre slap my face. You expect me, of course, to send him a challenge. I shall not do anything of the kind. My reasons are locked here." He placed his right hand over his heart. "But," he continued, his voice hardening, "if any man here doubts my courage in the least, let him step forward if he dare, and I will make him change his opinion."

Not a man stepped forward or said a word. Ferdinand Gayarre suddenly burst into tears, rushed forward, embraced Charles Patton, and apologized. They were as Damon and Pythias until they died.

Into this scene came to manhood Edward Bermudez, who was chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court from 1880 to 1892. His pistol-shooting was as deadly as his legal logic, his sword-play flashing as his wit and oratory. He was a great lawyer, a great jurist, and a fearless duellist.

One of the group with whom he associated in New Orleans was Monsieur Lepouse, a dreamy, lovable scholar and poet, attached to the faculty of the College d'Orleans. One night at a table, over the wine bottles, the talk turned to the College d'Orleans. The words of the witty thrust Edward Bermudez made at the struggling young college do not survive. But Lepouse, who had been devoting himself to the wine bottles, flashed into sudden fury and publicly challenged Bermudez to a duel for the honor of the college.

Bermudez did not want to fight the man. He sought reconciliation. But with the stubbornness of the gentle when aroused, Lepouse refused all peace overtures. He even stipulated suicide conditions to the duel, though as challenger that was not his privilege under the Code of Honor.

"We fight with pistols at five paces," ruled Lepouse.

"But why?" demanded his stunned seconds.

"I cannot hit a barn door at ten paces," said Lepouse.

"Bermudez can drive a nail with a pistol bullet at twenty paces," he was reminded.

"*Certainment,*" said Lepouse, and added words that survive in New Orleans history: "*Il me tuera je le toucherai, j'en suis sur.*"

"Certainly. He will kill me. But I'm sure I'll wound him."

So next morning they met, with seconds and pistols, at Bayou Road near Bayou St. John. The fifteen foot distance Lepouse had stipulated was paced off. The seconds, sad-faced, started loading the pistols.

Lepouse, as unconsciously as today a man would reach for a cigarette, reached into his waistcoat pocket for his snuff-box. He had opened the lid and started to take a pinch when the instinctive courtesy and good manners of a lifetime took control. There was Edward Bermudez, his friend, standing close by. He had not offered him snuff before taking it for himself! With the gentle, winning smile by which all men knew him, Lepouse extended the open snuff-box to Bermudez.

Startled, Bermudez hesitated. One did not customarily take snuff from a man one was about to face, pistol in hand, at five paces. Lepouse saw the hesitation, but misinterpreted it. He knew Edward Bermudez was a bon vivant, fastidious about his food, his wines, his snuff. "Macouba" snuff was the best man could buy.

"*Prenez-en,*" Lepouse reassured Bermudez. "*C'est du bon. C'est du Macouba pur.*"

"Take some. It's good. It's pure Macouba."

"There was something simple, yet grand, in that act," said one of the seconds later. "It was the alliance of valor, gallantry and good manners."

Edward Bermudez bowed, took the snuff, and a moment later the two men stood face to face at fifteen feet. The signal sounded. Lepouse fired. The ball sang past the head of Edward Bermudez. Then, deliberately, Edward Bermudez, who could have picked the button on Lepouse's shirt he wanted to hit, and hit it at that distance, fired past Lepouse's head. He couldn't kill the man whose snuff he had just taken. But he always denied it.

"That pinch of snuff, the kind and affectionate face of that scholar and poet fighting for the honor of his college, paralyzed my nerves at the moment of firing," Edward Bermudez said gruffly to a friend. If that was true, it was the only time in a long and stormy life that anything ever paralyzed the Bermudez nerves.

NEW ORLEANS newspaper men, in those days before the Civil War, took the prospects of duels as a routine part of their work. "Fighting Editor" meant something very specific then. Don Jose Quintero of the old New Orleans *Picayune* staff considered his duelling pistols as much part of his working kit as his pencils and pens.

When Mrs. Eliza Poitevent Nicholson became publisher of the paper, the first woman publisher of any major American daily, Don Jose oiled his pistols and announced publicly that if any man felt wronged by the paper, he would accept all challenges on Mrs. Nicholson's behalf.

It was Don Jose who wrote the New Orleans Code of Honor, a revision of the classic French Code of Honor, and published it in phamphlet form; the only known official Code of Honor published in the United States of America. His son, Lamar Quintero, born in Mexico when Don Jose was representing the Confederate States of America there, later revised the Code of Honor his father had published, and re-published it in New Orleans.

In 1851 New Orleans was in political turmoil. Dr. Thomas Hunt was a veteran of the Mexican War, a passionate partisan of Henry Clay. His faction resorted to the ancient political strategy of "packing a meeting" that was to nominate the candidate for Congress for the Second Louisiana Congressional District. John W. Frost, city editor of the New Orleans *Crescent,* exposed the trick; the paper attacked it editorially. Dr. Hunt publically called Frost a liar. Frost challenged.

His seconds, Victor Kerr and Joseph H. Maddox, arranged with Colonel William Bell and Edouard Bouligny, seconds for Dr. Hunt for the fight to take place at the Halfway House on Metairie Ridge, a suburb. There the police arrested them all; Judge Caldwell bonded them to keep the peace.

But by prior arrangement, they made their way individually to the parade ground back of Jackson Barracks, just below New Orleans. Dr. Hunt was a famous shot at flying birds with a double-barreled shotgun. There his seconds produced the weapons he had chosen; double-barreled shotguns loaded with round lead musket-balls, to be used at forty paces. Frost consented with: "It is his right to name weapons and conditions."

Both duellists missed both shots at first fire. No effort at reconciliation was made. At the second fire, Dr. Hunt's ball tore through Frost's breast. He was dead ten minutes later. Next day thousands marched through New Orleans streets, escorting his body to the steamboat that took it to Alexandria, La., for burial. No legal action was taken against Dr. Hunt.

Today in New Orleans, Exchange Alley stretches from Canal Street to Conti Street, between Royal and Chartres Streets, dedicated to prosaic pursuits such as laundries, saloons, small offices. But a century ago it was the alley of the fencing masters.

They were the professional masters-at-arms who taught sword and pistol to young Louisiana gentlemen—a part of their education as routine as languages, literature, mathematics, dancing and horsemanship. Their Salles d'Armes were crowded daily. The slither of steel sounded through open windows as men fenced, the crack of pistol as men stood with their backs to targets, wheeled and fired on command.

No college or university athlete today wears his "letter" on varsity sweater with more pride than did the young patrons of these Salles d'Armes feel when they could quietly: *"J'ai fait mes preuves."*

"I've proved myself." He had faced his man under the Code, deadly weapons in the hands of each. He had proved his courage. He was a man.

Here in the Alley of the Fencing Masters in the 1830s and 1840s reigned such masters-at-arms as Lalouette, an Alsatian; Montiache, part Alsatian, part Swiss, a verteran of the armies of Napoleon Bonaparte; Cazeres, of Bordeaux; Baudoin, of Paris; the two brothers Rosiere, of Marseilles; Dauphin, of Paris; all white men. But there were Negroes, too, in that curious democracy of deadliness. Black Austin, "free man of color," was deadly with the small-sword. Robert Severin, free mulatto, was a master-swordsman, who was to die in battle in Mexico. Basile Croquere proudly bore the title of deadliest Negro swordsman in New Orleans.

Out of this narrow Alley of the Fencing Masters, only three city blocks long, came fantastic history, bred of personal and professional antagonisms.

LALOUETTE figures in many an episode. Because his deadly skill and unflinching courage were so well known, he did not even blush when New Orleans roared with laughter at his clash with a simple Acadian farmer, in which the great Lalouette came out second best.

Lalouette had ridden on horseback to a country ball, given one Saturday night several miles up the Mississippi River above New Orleans. Drinking was heavy. The master-at-arms grossly insulted the Acadian farmer.

"You'll pay me for this," promised the farmer. Men laughed. A clumsy farmer against the great Lalouette!

"In the morning, little man," said Lalouette. "We are busy drinking now."

The farmer was nowhere in sight when, Sunday morning, Lalouette mounted his horse to ride back to New Orleans. But as Lalouette rounded a bend in the road a mile below, there sat the farmer on his horse. Lalouette rode straight toward him.

In the farmer's hand was a stock whip, with a short, heavy oaken handle, a long, plaited rawhide lash. Experts could cut buttons off coats with it at twenty feet.

As Lalouette came within range, the long lash snaked out. The thong at the end popped like a pistol-shot. A gash opened in Lalouette's cheek. Instinctively he flung up his arm to guard his eyes. Again the lash cracked. Through Lalouette's thin cotton coat and shirt the rawhide cut like a knife across his ribs. Blood stained the garments.

Now it sounded like a fusillade, the stock-whip lash cracked and popped so fast. Other guests at the dance rode into sight around the bend in time to see the mighty Lalouette reel and fall from his horse, unconscious. They knelt about him and revived him. The Acadian farmer sat his horse, watching silently. Lalouette staggered to his feet. Through slashed and bleeding lips he

challenged the farmer to a duel.

"I accept," said the farmer. "You have challenged. So I name conditions and weapons. Double-bitted woodsmen's axes at three feet."

"I fight no madman under madhouse conditions," muttered Lalouette, mounted, and rode on his way. And though New Orleans rocked with laughter at the tale, no man held Lalouette any lighter.

For all men remembered the duel between Lalouette and Montiache. That was a battle of titans.

Pupils of Montiache had deserted him for Lalouette, as the better master. Montiache raged.

"I'll show them who's the best man!" roared Napoleon Bonaparte's old soldier, and sent his challenge for a duel.

They met, formally, with seconds, on Gentilly by the bayou, a New Orleans suburb. Colichemards, the Creole rapiers, were the weapons. Never, said the seconds afterward, had they seen such swordplay. Thrust, parry, riposte and thrust again, the combat lasted full ten minutes of fierce and spectacular swordsmanship before Lalouette's point ripped into the arm of Montiache. Blood spurted.

Instantly the blades of the seconds struck aloft the blades of the duellists. Under the Code, honor was satisfied. But not Montiache!

"That is not a good hit, my children!" he protested, in what the ancient record calls "his execrable French." He looked scornfully at his bleeding arm, shook his head fiercely.

"No!" roared Montiache. "That is a hit for little children! Here is the place where a real swordsman ought to strike! Here! Here! Here!"

With each of those last three words he pounded his clenched fist upon his chest.

"The fight goes on!" said Montiache.

Lalouette was willing. Again the slim blades crossed and rang. Again the dazzling succession of thrusts, parries, ripostes, feints.

Then with a swift feint and a desperate lunge, the blade of Lalouette slid over the guard of Montiache like a striking snake. It ran Montiache cleanly through the chest. It barely missed his heart.

No look of surprise or sudden agony contorted Montiache's face, the seconds swore afterward. It was a pleased smile, they pledged their word.

"Ah, yes! *That's* good! That one *is* good!" he said.

He walked steadily to the edge of the bayou. He stooped low, scooped up handfuls of water, and dashed them upon his sweating face, his bleeding chest and arm.

Then he turned and walked back to them all.

"Yes, indeed!" said the simple old soldier of Napoleon. "That was good! That one was good! Ah, yes! That *was* a good one! This man Lalouette, he is good too! Why, he could hit even me!"

Amazingly, Montiache recovered. More amazingly, he and Lalouette became reconciled, became close friends, entered into partnership. They opened the greatest Salle d'Armes New Orleans ever knew.

DAILY it was crowded with pupils and spectators. Swordsmanship, marksmanship, were the football, baseball of that day. Among those spectators, one day in 1835, stood a slim blond youth with blue-gray eyes, watching intently the bouts of the young gentlemen with the fencing foils. From pupil to pupil moved Lalouette, stopping to chat with old friends among the spectators from time to time.

To one of them he complained bitterly of the scarcity of durable assistants to himself and Montiache. They were the men who spent endless hours giving the pupils practise in the lessons of the masters. They were the sparring partners of their day.

It was the ultimate test of courage.

As the dinner hour neared and the spectators left, the slim blond youth with the blue-gray eyes remained.

"I would like to work here as one of your assistants," he told Lalouette.

"Can you fence and shoot?" demanded the master.

"No, but I can learn. And I can fight with the knife."

"You are engaged," said Lalouette. "What is your name?"

"Jose Llulla," said the slim youth. He gave it the Spanish pronunciation: "Hosay Yu-ya."

A knife-fighter was a gold-mine to a master-at-arms just then. The bloody mêlée known to this day as the Vidalia Sand-Bar Fight was the favorite topic of all fighting men. In that combat just across the Mississippi River from Natchez, James Bowie had emerged wounded but triumphant; the weapon that men still call the Bowie knife had received its baptism in human blood.

A passion for knife fighting had swept South and Southwest. It was the ultimate test of courage. Men faced each other, grasping Bowie knives in their right hands, their left hands holding the diagonally opposite corners of a big silk handkerchief, and thrust, slashed, stabbed at the word. The man who let go his corner of the handkerchief while conscious was disgraced.

Pupils flocked to masters-at-arms, clamoring to be taught the new art and technique. Lalouette, himself a master knife-fighter, had more of them than he could handle.

Jose Llulla's first tryout bout with Lalouette, with the blunt wooden knives the masters used for teaching, showed that he had not boasted when he said simply: "I can fight with the knife." The youth was a master of the weapon. His slim body had enormous strength and endurance. His speed and coordination were uncanny. His coolness, courage and control were absolute.

Lalouette learned the lad was a native of Port Mahon, Spain, born in 1815, a loyal subject to King Ferdinand VII.

He had gone to sea with his parents' consent at the age of ten, a cabin-boy on an American ship. Young Jose Llulla had sailed the world, and at fifteen was a sailor before the mast.

In those days a sailor's sheath-knife was as much a part of his costume as his trousers. Jose Llulla had learned his knife-fighting in forecastles from experts. He had found need to use that knowledge in wild and distant ports. Early in 1835 he had come ashore in New Orleans. He took the first job offered, that of bouncer in a sailors' waterfront boarding house and saloon. It was a man-size job. He filled it. Then, drawn by his love of weapons, he had wandered in his off-duty into the Alley of the Fencing Masters.

Pleased with his new assistant's knife-fighting prowess, Lalouette gave Jose Llulla swift courses of instruction in fencing and pistol-shooting. The youth proved to be a born master-at-arms. And his manner, voice, bearing, showed that he came of good blood, even though he had entered the Salle d'Armes through the back door.

Coffee-houses, gambling houses, the clubs of the day, began to echo with talk of this quiet, gentle-mannered, deadly youth who worked for Lalouette. Tirelessly each day he labored with pupils; practised for himself. He was born for weapons and loved them.

Then the whispers began to circulate that Jose Llulla, the assistant, was a greater knife-fighter than Lalouette, the master.

New Orleans was a sounding-board. The whispers reached the ears of Lalouette. Rage gripped the great master. Publicly next day in the Salle d'Armes, when the crowd of spectators was thickest, he challenged the youth to a public exhibition with the wooden knives, a referee to count the points as each man made a hit. Jose Llulla accepted calmly.

All New Orleans called him "Pepe" Llulla, now. "Pepe" is the Spanish affectionate diminutive for "Jose", the "Joe" to the English "Joseph." They pronounced it "Pay-pay Yu-ya." And that name has power to stir a glint in the eyes of New Orleans old-timers yet. For the memory lingers of how the gamble-loving city of nearly a century ago bet itself wild on Pepe Llulla or on Lalouette.

THEY met on a stage before a record crowd. Moments of dazzling knifeplay followed. Lalouette found his every thrust parried by Pepe Llulla's blade, save those which whistled through empty air as the youth's marvellous foot-work and lithe body-swerve made mockery of the old master's attack.

Pepe Llulla's points were piling up. Suddenly Lalouette lost his temper completely. Certain thrusts were barred in an exhibition bout like this, with wooden knives. A thrust to the abdomen was one, the deadly disembowelling slash that ended so many knife duels. Ribs were the target here. But Lalouette, mad with rage as applause greeted the knife-play of his young opponent, launched the disembowing drive with the wooden knife.

Like a flash of light, Pepe Llulla parried the thrust. Like a flash of light he sprang in and delivered a terrific thrust to the ribs. Lalouette was hurled to the floor by the force of the blow. He lay there semi-conscious. When they picked him up, they discovered two of his ribs were broken.

Of course, after that, there was only one thing for Pepe Llulla to do, and he did it. He opened his own Salle d'Armes.

Incredible tales of his personal prowess with weapons sleep in old newspaper files of the time. His contemporaries hailed him as a master of rapier, saber and broadsword; of pistol, rifle and shotgun; and always of his favorite weapon, the fighting knife.

They record that with muzzle-loading duelling pistols he shot coins from between his friends' thumbs and forefingers at fifteen paces, which are forty-five feet. They report that at this same range with this same weapon he shot pipes from between the teeth of his friends, who obligingly stood sidewise as volunteer targets. That gave a man distinction in New Orleans then.

They tell that at thirty paces (ninety feet) Pepe Llulla with his duelling pistol shot an egg off the head of his own son, "and often accomplished this feat for his friends." That with pistol, rifle, shotgun, he shot down objects tossed in air "until men tired of the sport."

From the 1830s into the 1850s, four or five duels a day were routine in New Orleans. When a man accepted the invitation of his friend to act as second in a duel, he went prepared to fight himself, and frequently did. Masters-at-arms were favorite seconds for their pupils and friends. By their very profession they could hardly refuse. It was a system that automatically made a duellist out of every master of a Salle d'Armes.

Added to these "normal" risks of the business, into New Orleans came swaggering men confident of their own deadliness as swordsmen and shots, who challenged famed masters-at-arms to duels as the quickest road to fame for themselves.

It was an exact parallel of the gunfighting frontier West of a slightly later date, when no man widely known as a deadly gunfighter ever knew what minute some glory-seeking stranger would try to beat him to the draw on any pretext or no pretext at all.

It was a dangerous road in a dangerous world those masters of New Orleans Salles d'Armes trod. But for those who survived, it was good professional advertising.

Pepe Llulla never boasted, his contemporaries agree. But they agree, too, that he never refused a challenge to fight, and that he accepted unquestioningly any condition any man who wanted to fight him cared to impose.

Some of those conditions were the news of their day. Daggers in a dark locked room. Bowie knives inside an empty sugar hogshead. Revolvers, with each combatant holding diagonally opposite corners of a bandana handkerchief. Drawing lots for two duelling pistols, one loaded, one unloaded.

Pepe Llulla accepted them all. He accepted one other, but his second refused. He went to the designated spot alone. His opponent failed to appear. The opponent had proposed drawing lots to settle who should first take one of two pills, identical in appearance, out of a pasteboard box. One was harmless, one was deadly poison. Pepe Llulla even brought the pills and the affidavit of the pharmacist who compounded them, which he had assured pharmacist and notary on his word of honor would be burned before either pill was swallowed, to prevent legal complications for them.

"My seconds refused to take part in what they called an assassination," Pepe Llulla explained to his friends later. "I disagreed with them. The chances were even. It seemed to me merely a question of courage."

A known scoundrel once challenged a friend of Pepe Llulla. The friend accepted. Pepe learned of the affair, suspected some treachery, volunteered as a second. When all appeared on the "field of honor" the treachery swiftly came to light. The challenger's second was a newly-arrived German fencing master.

"I have come," said the scoundrel, "but I am too sick to fight. My second, however, will fight for me."

"My principal, too, is too sick to fight," said Pepe Llulla. "But I am happy to fight in his place. The German school of fencing always has interested me."

It was a perfect checkmate. Second

faced second, the rapiers crossed, and within thirty seconds Pepe Llulla had run the German fencing master through the lungs.

"I see nothing to change my opinion of German fencing," said Pepe Llulla calmly, as he rolled down the shirt-sleeve over his right arm.

THEN came the time when Pepe Llulla wrote international history.

One of the earlier Cuban revolutions against Spain started to boil furiously. The revolutionists selected New Orleans as the convenient headquarters for their "junta." Fire-eating Cuban patriots thronged the coffee houses, the saloons, the restaurants, the gambling palaces. In Spanish and English they told their opinion of the Spanish throne, predicted what they were soon to do to the troops of Spain. American adventurers joined them.

Pepe Llulla listened. He had been born a loyal subject of the Spanish throne. His forefathers had fought for it. He was a Spanish subject yet. He had never taken out American citizenship papers. He went home, sat down, thought awhile, and then went to a printing office.

Next morning New Orleans awoke to find the downtown section of the city placarded with posters in Spanish, English and French. In bold letters they gave the name of Pepe Llulla and his address. In bold language they gave the world the message that in the eyes of Pepe Llulla these Cuban revolutionists were traitors to the Spanish throne, and that contempt was the only emotion with which a loyal Spanish subject could look upon such traitors and their allies. And then in those posters Pepe Llulla challenged the whole Cuban revolution to a duel.

He made only one condition. He would fight them one at a time, as long as they cared to come, and they could choose the weapons.

New Orleans buzzed like a wasp-nest. All except Pepe Llulla. Calmly he left his home at his usual time, opened his Salle d'Armes. He kept his appointments with his pupils. He appeared at his usual coffee house at his accustomed time. Then, for Pepe Llulla, he made himself unusually conspicuous.

He strolled the streets. He visited saloons. He stopped and chatted publicly with friends. Men pointed him out to other men as the man who that very morning had challenged a whole Cuban revolution. Calmly to excited questioners he confirmed the posters.

And the measure of the time and the man is that nobody laughed, and not one fire-eating Cuban revolutionist appeared to accept the challenge!

New Orleans newspapers printed the story. New Orleans correspondents sent it out to other American cities, to Europe, to Latin America.

Weeks later the Spanish consul at New Orleans, at a public ceremony, by order of the Spanish throne, conferred knighthood and the knightly Order of Carlos III upon Don Jose Llulla.

At the same time, he presented the new Spanish knight with a square of gold brocade. In the center of it was a portrait of Don Jose Llulla. Above the head was a laurel wreath. Below was the inscription: "To Don Jose Llulla, heroic defender of our national honor among the traitors of New Orleans." Portrait, wreath and inscription had been embroidered by the loyal Spanish ladies of Havana with tresses of hair shorn from their own beautiful heads!

BUT Don Jose Llulla, knight of Spain, remained "Pepe" Llulla to his New Orleans friends. He sold his Salle d'Armes before the Civil War broke out. He invested his modest fortune in various businesses.

One of his investments was a private cemetery, the old Louisa Street Ceme-

tery in New Orleans. It was a profitable investment. But it led to the widely-printed legend that in New Orleans was a duellist so deadly he had to buy a cemetery in which to bury his victims!

Another of his investments was Grande Terre, the Louisiana coastal sea island that once was headquarters for forts, warehouses and slave barracoons of Jean Lafitte, the buccaneer of Barataria. He turned it into a cattle ranch. And there, in 1885, when he was seventy years old, he appeared armed and ready for battle for the last time. The huge and surly lighthouse keeper on Grande Terre, a man named Douglas, had affronted him. Friends stepped between them. Pepe Llulla started for his house. Friends followed him there, arguing for an amicable reconciliation.

"Now let me go back and tell Douglas you will meet him," said the spokesman, in the doorway.

"Very well," said Pepe Llulla. "You may see Mr. Douglas for me. You may say to him that I am ready to settle our little difficulty. I will be on the beach here in front of my house tomorrow at ten o'clock in the morning. With my shotgun. We will settle to his entire satisfaction."

And with dignity befitting a knight of Spain, Pepe Llulla entered his house.

Promptly at ten o'clock next morning the erect old figure with the shotgun paraded up and down the beach for a full hour. Douglas did not appear.

Pepe Llulla died in his bed of natural causes at the age of seventy-three, March 14, 1888. New Orleans thronged to his home for the funeral. They found it an arsenal of beautiful and costly weapons, the only gifts he would accept from friends for whom he served as a second in duels. He died, as he was born, a loyal subject of the throne of Spain.

The conservative old *New Orleans Picayune* in his obituary said:

> He was the greatest duellist in New Orleans' long duelling history. He fought more than thirty duels as a principal. He served as second in more than one hundred duels, fighting frequently in that capacity.
>
> He would have fought many more duels, but as men who had challenged him thought it over, they began more and more to send their apologies, or simply not put in an appearance on the field; to vanish in disgrace. Pepe Llulla never refused to fight, no matter what conditions were imposed. He prided himself on this.

In a world where life's a fight, there are worse obituaries.

Duelling in New Orleans, on the wane in Pepe Llulla's declining years, virtually died with the city's greatest duellist. There were sporadic flare-ups. In 1889 C. Harrison Parker, editor of the *New Orleans Picayune,* met Major E. A. Burke, editor of the *New Orleans Times-Democrat* and Louisiana state treasurer, formally, with pistols, and shot Major Burke horizontally from right to left through that most undignified portion of the masculine human anatomy; the part covered by the seat of the pants. But however broad the humor of that day, few cared to refer jestingly to that episode in the presence of Major Burke. The last known formal challenge to a duel in New Orleans was carried by Billy Steele, fighting city editor of the old New Orleans *Picayune,* on behalf of Major Thomas E. Davis, chief editorial writer of the *Picayune,* to Henry H. Baker of the *Times-Democrat.* But friends stepped in and arranged a reconciliation on the grounds that even Louisiana politics of the mid-1890s weren't worth two good men killing each other.

New Orleans' long duellists' parade had ended. Personal combats thereafter came under the classification of plain street shootings.

But during the century that parade lasted, it wrote some of the most fantastic and colorful pages in American history. And it wrote them in red.

Like a huge, brown bat, flying through space.

A CHANGE OF BOOTS

By PERRY ADAMS

THAT summer morning, in extended order, the brigade sprawled across two valleys and the barren, gray-brown ridge which partitioned them, and the advance had begun at 3:08, exactly one hour before dawn. After months of hide and seek, the elusive Zakka Khels had decided to stand and fight; scout planes reported them building *sangars* on a high ridge due west. So the British were moving up before a blistering Pathan sun at their backs would make flesh crawl under the quilted spine pads.

Even now, just at sunup, the day was too hot for tunics. The long lines of infantry were advancing in their graybacks—shirts not so gray as powder blue. Like the rest, the Durham Light Infantry wore fighting shorts, the kind you rarely see illustrated. An extra length folded back and buttoned to the regulation length above the knee, but going into action the extra fold was let down over puttees to the calf, so that men lying prone might not get the "tap" behind their knees. In India, one may get sunstroke there about as easily as through a faulty helmet.

More fertile than most of the surrounding country, the Durhams' valley had been under recent cultivation; a crop of early Chinese wheat had already been harvested, leaving a prickly stubble —uncounted, naked bayonet tips upthrust through the parched earth.

Billy Burkitt had a hole in the sole of his left boot, under the base of his

small toe; and although he had taken Jed McKay's advice and plugged the gap with a wad cut from his spine pad, the tufted cloth, clumsy there at best, had soon shifted. Billy left a red trail as he limped through the sharp stubble. He uttered no word of complaint—he was not the complaining kind—but Jed McKay, three paces to his right, kept glancing at him with covert anxiety.

They were coming into the zone of fire now. As yet no one had been hit, and by some trick of acoustics the sound of the tribal firing did not reach them. Yet everyone knew well enough; for all about them was a mild rustling and pattering, as if a thunder shower had released its first hesitant drops.

The Durhams were too far in advance. A whistle halted them until the line could straighten.

"Ye silly gowk," Jed McKay growled, "ye're bleedin' like a stuck pig." A big, rangy Northcountryman, this Jed; black, beetle-browed. It was only when you caught the look in his deep-set black eyes that you sensed his harsh speech and perpetual scowl meant little: the eyes were shrewd, kind, and forever smiling.

They were all sitting down and Billy Burkitt, cupping the ailing foot in his hands, twisted it round to inspect the sole. Billy was fair and slight, even frail. Anything, he, but a typical Tynesider, where the breed is mostly thick and rugged and hard for the rough, tough life of the coal country. Men like Jed McKay.

"I sh'd o' wore me new boots," Billy muttered, "but they wasn't broke in."

Jed snorted at him, "Them boots is a hunnert miles 'n more away."

Inches from Billy's foot a bullet struck a rock: *spat—whee-e-e!* Billy wet his lips with a nervous tongue and shot an apprehensive look at his pal. Jed merely shrugged.

"W'y worry ower that 'un?" he asked.

With a slight shiver, Billy resumed looking at his foot, explored the raw flesh with a grimy forefinger, wincing.

"Gawd," he said, "I'd oughta be able t'slide *somethin'* in there what'd keep me foot from the ground."

"Och, ye're a bleedy nuisance," Jed flung at him, unrolling his left puttee.

"What ye doin?" Billy demanded.

"Us, we takes th' same size in boots, if nowt else," Jed said.

"Ye mean, ye'd gie me yours?"

"A loan is a'. Anythin' t' stop yer grousin'."

"Na, na, Jed. I couldna'."

"Shut yer head 'n put it on," Jed said roughly. And when Billy further protested: "Ye want I sh'd black yer eye?"

He'd do it, too!

So the exchange was made. Jed replugged the hole with a folded strip of flannel torn from the tail of his grayback.

Billy watched him. "Gie me that boot back, Jed. Yon patch's better 'n the wee bit o' stuff I had. If 'twill hold you, 'twill hold me."

But Jed put the boot on, laced it up.

"Ye want th' black eye? Forget it, I tell ye."

The line moved on. The close-cropped wheat had been bad enough, but now the way was over flinty rubble. Billy knew that no cloth patch would last long in such going and he knew Jed must know it, too. That was Jed's way. He never counted the cost to himself; Jed was always giving, never taking.

OFTEN Billy wondered how he'd go on did anything happen to Jed. It was slightly more than three years since Jed had found him, a white-faced, puny little drowned rat of a lad, kicked from pillar to post in the great Hearthside Colliery, whose pitheads rose stark as so many gibbets out of the very heart of Gateshead, across the Tyne from Newcastle. Billy was motherless. His father, whom Jed had known by sight

only, had been killed by a cave-in of a remote gallery which followed the working vein far out under River Tyne.

Thus suddenly thrust on his own, Billy had been picking up a precarious living as a pit boy. But nature had not endowed him for the rigorous labor; try as he might, he was a weak cog in a relentless machine where brawn was the sole yardstick. Even the friendly foreman who had hired him at last soured and decided he must go. By chance, Jed, working nearby, heard the conversation which meant the end of Billy's job. He saw the hopeless, desperate look that came into the boy's face; persuaded his own foreman to take Billy on.

Big Jed, only a couple of years older than Billy, was already a hewer earning his three quid and more a week—a powerful youngster as useful in a rough and tumble scrap as he was in breaking down the stubborn coal. And so while Jed's gang did not hail Billy's advent with enthusiasm, out of respect for Jed they let the boy alone; he ceased to be a butt. More important, sensing Billy's friendlessness, Jed had taken him home to live with him in one of a long, drab row of miners' cottages.

"Poor little runt needs some'un t'take an interest, some'un t'fatten him up," Jed explained to his mother. "Me 'n you, we'll put some flesh onto him, make a man o' him."

In time the enormously grateful Billy did begin to fill out a bit. But he remained timid, entirely unassertive, seemingly scared of his own shadow—a well-meaning kid who was victim of a stunted adolescence.

Hard times came at the colliery; the moment arrived when Jed and Billy found themselves laid off. There was the dole, but Jed scorned it.

"Charity's for weaklin's 'n cripples, not for the likes of us," he told his mother. Billy, listening, swelled with pride at that "us".

But for all Jed's sturdy assurances, there was no work to be had in any of the North Country collieries—or elsewhere. An economic blight had fallen upon Durham and Northumberland, and soon the three faced starvation.

"How," Jed asked Billy on a day when they had tramped the streets in vain, "how's for you 'n me t'go for soldiers?"

Gateshead, Newcastle, Sunderland—the Durham Light Infantry had all the North Sea coal towns plastered with recruiting posters. But hoping for better times, out-of-work miners had been slow to take the king's shilling. Instead, most had taken the easiest way out—the dole.

"Soldierin's better'n charity," Jed went on, sensing Billy's hesitation.

Billy couldn't picture himself as a soldier, but he was afraid Jed would think he hung back, figuring in the end they'd take the dole after all; so Billy merely said:

"If ye like, Jed. Only, they'd never take th' size o' me, I'm thinkin'."

But they did. Recruiting was at low ebb; the bars were down. Right then three hundred men were needed as replacements for time-expired members of the First Battalion in India—badly needed.

As in colliery days, Jed was mostly at Billy's elbow to ease him over the rough spots. Jed had started out to make a man of him, and nothing could shake the big fellow's determination, his faith.

"I know th' stuff's there inside ye, lad," Jed told Billy in a moment of rare confidence. "Between us, we got t'bring it oot—'n bring it we wull!"

Jed's fine, shining faith! Pretty often in the training period which followed, Billy wondered whether it wasn't misplaced. Whether Jed was not wasting time on him. For, along with his tendency to be a doormat, Billy was clumsy and slow to learn his new job. Hard-boiled sergeant-instructors didn't stop to consider how Billy was trying. All they saw was what he did. So, almost faster than Jed could pump self-confidence

into him, impatient N. C. O.'s knocked it out. But Jed never seemed to lose patience; he was always the same.

Just before the draft sailed, the pair saw Jed's mother safely moved to her married sister's in Yorkshire. Both had allotted her the maximum separation allowance from their pay; on the double amount she would do nicely.

IN India, they found the First Battalion in the old barracks on the outskirts of Nowshera, where the dusty gun carriage trail to Manki Pass cuts across the blue-gray plain like a wide white ribbon. A tough outfit, this lot—made harder, more callous by the long stretch overseas. Those Durham barracks were no place for anyone who couldn't look out for himself.

In the long single-decker bungalow, where Jed and Billy had adjoining beds, the rest of the platoon soon came to know the authority of Jed's hamlike fists. Yet as was inevitable, there were times when duty separated Jed and his protégé.

It was on such an occasion, not long after the draft's arrival, that Billy's persecution at the hands of Cadmus had its real beginning. A short, apelike man, this Cadmus; bowlegged and not much taller than Billy, but grotesquely long of arm. Spawned in a Sunderland slum, early left to shift for himself, Cadmus had known only the right of might; you took what you could get, avoided those stronger than yourself, imposed your will on the weaker. If the man's slyly hard, predatory face was that of a bully, it was because life had given him an immense contempt for all who could not stand four-square on their own feet. Cadmus had marked Billy out as a softie and figured him fair game.

At about four each afternoon, the men took turns going to the cookhouse for the regular *degshi** of tea; and today Cadmus' neighbor in the next bunk reminded him that his turn had come.

Yawning, his close-set eyes still full of sleep, Cadmus scowled across the bungalow to where Billy sat on his bed polishing his tunic buttons. Cadmus called:

"Hey, draftie! How's for you gettin' th' *chah?*"

Billy looked up briefly, went on with his buttons.

"Not my turn," he called back, "it's some'un over on your side."

Cadmus swung his feet from the bed to slate floor with an ominous plunk.

"I says ye're goin', just th' same."

"But it's not my turn," Billy repeated.

The next instant Cadmus hovered over him with unmistakable menace.

"You goin'?"

Billy shook his head.

Button-stick, brush, tunic and the tin of "Soldier's Friend" went flying. Cadmus jerked Billy to his feet, twisted his arm up and back almost to breaking point.

This was the picture which greeted Jed, returning earlier than expected from a quartermaster's fatigue. In a few strides the big man was beside them, had slapped Cadmus half the length of the bungalow.

Cadmus picked himself up, rubbing his jaw. "W'y'n't ye pick on some'un yer size?" he growled.

"'N w'y don't *you?*" Jed flashed at him, only to pull up short, reddening. The truth was, Cadmus and Billy were much of a size.

After that, although Cadmus took pains to let Billy alone when Jed was about, he showed his mounting contempt in a hundred disagreeable ways.

Yet there was a quality in Billy which made it impossible for him to carry tales. Only once did he complain to Jed. Nursing hurts too obvious to conceal—raw knees and an eye newly blackened—he told Jed:

"If juist *once* I c'd give Cadmus a

*A large oval container used throughout the Indian army. Always mispronounced "dixie".

thunderin' good lickin', he'd maybe let me alone, I'm thinkin'."

It was a perfect opening for a biting, obvious retort, but Jed did not make it.

"Aye," he said slowly, "if I bash him again for ye, 'twill not truly help, lad. 'Tis a battle ye moost fight for yerself." Jed was thinking clearly, but it was never easy for him to express himself. " 'Twould be th' battle o' yer life," he mused, half to himself.

"Easy t'talk," Billy retorted bitterly. "Easy t'say what I sh'd do to him. Och, Jed, w'y canna I be like yerself?"

"No credit bein' born big."

"I dinna mean *that.* Was ye small as me, ye'd be th' same."

Jed frowned embarrassment. "Mebbe, mebbe not." Suddenly he looked squarely into Billy's eyes. "W'y do ye keep puttin' it off? 'Tis yersel' can lick Cadmus, 'n no man can tell me different."

"Aw—later, perhaps."

"*Now!* First chance ye get. What's t'use spoofin' yersel', Billy lad?"

That chance presented itself the next evening, when Jed was away mounting quarterguard at retreat. Billy, planning a visit to Nowshera bazaar, watched the changing of the guard in the spring twilight, then returned to quarters to don walking-out dress. By the time he reached the bungalow, the long room, deserted at this hour, was in deep shadow. It was only when Billy reached his bed that he saw the handiwork of his tormentor. For the freshly starched slacks and tunic laid out so carefully against his return had been tied together in a crumpled mass impossible to wear.

Footsteps echoed and a shadow moved down the bungalow—Cadmus, returning from the washroom with towel and metal basin.

"It's got t'be now," Billy thought. He commenced to tremble; his whole body cringed away from the beating he anticipated.

Across the aisle Cadmus drooped basin on barrack box and ignoring Billy, whistled through his teeth.

Billy held up the tangled khaki bundle.

"Your handiwork, eh?" His voice cracked.

Cadmus peered at him in mock surprise.

"What d'ye mean?" he demanded, truculently innocent.

"Well ye know!"

"Och, go to hell," Cadmus flung at him indifferently.

On knees that buckled, Billy moved across the aisle and, before the incredulous Cadmus could put up his hands, swung a right to the other's nose. Yet even as the blow landed, Billy felt what little fight he'd been able to muster, oozing away. He had gone at the thing halfheartedly and he was aghast at what he had done. Now he was in for a licking, and no mistake!

WHEN Jed came off guard in the morning, he found Billy so battered that he had been excused from duty for the day.

"So," Jed said shortly. " 'N what did ye do to him?"

Billy avoided his eyes. "I started it, I hit him first, but somehow, I had t' feelin' I couldn't lick him—" The words trailed off.

"At least ye hit him onct," Jed said patiently, "but ye'll never beat him, long's ye thing ye canna. Yet th' second ye *know* ye can, ye wull."

The big moment had not arrived. Cadmus, naturally, continued to vent his scorn of a man who apparently would take anything. Yet Billy, loathing himself for the worm he knew he was, a thousand times had tried vainly to nerve himself to the point where he might strike back and keep striking until he justified Jed's unswerving faith. That was how matters stood when the regiment joined the Peshawar column to take the field against marauding Zakka

Khel Afridis. Mean lads, those.

THE attackers were drawing in now. The sound of firing from tribal *sangars,* first unheard, then no more than the lisp of book pages riffled through a man's fingers, had become loud, insistent. And at intervals Billy heard a noise he likened to the roar of some enraged giant: *whoo-o-o-m-m.*

They all knew what it was—the Zakkas' famous leather cannon, trophy of some long-forgotten brush with the men of Tibet, for it was said to bear the mark of the Lhasa Saddlers' Guild. Once there must have been ammunition for this strange piece of ordnance, but the present owners were content to cram it with scrap iron and rocks, even bones. Nicknamed "Old Blusterer" because of its strident voice and relative harmlessness at any but the shortest ranges—when it could be very deadly indeed—as a curiosity this gun was almost priceless. The Durhams' colonel had vowed to capture it for the regimental mess.

The day, living up to early promise, had become stifling, with no breath of air. Distant objects danced in the heat. Topping a slight rise, Billy had a fleeting glimpse of the Zakkas' position. Gray *sangars,* wavering across the distance, even the ridge itself, seemed as unreal, as unsubstantial, as a stage setting.

Then the platoon moved into a hollow, out of range, and the order was passed to sit down. Earlier there had been only a dry ration; Billy, his mouth like an oven, reached for his water bottle.

It was empty. Billy couldn't believe his eyes. Cork out and upside down, he held it up for Jed to see.

"Dam' funny," Billy said. "Filled it full when we moved away from second line transport last nicht. It sh'd still've been more 'n half full, at least."

Jed's flannel boot patch had already worn through and he was inspecting his foot. He dropped it to examine Billy's bottle, to feel around its thick felt covering for dampness.

"Thought it might be a leak," he muttered, "but it don't seem so."

Here in the parched hills at the beginning of a day's fighting, far removed from the source of supply, an empty bottle was a serious matter. The two were puzzling over the bottle with grave concern when Billy, glancing up, happened to catch Cadmus' eye. Then Billy understood. He remembered leaving his equipment on the ground, unguarded for a few moments, during a halt the previous night. Cadmus' over-innocent expression told Billy, plainer than words, that the man had been at his water.

Jed's eyes followed Billy's.

"Do ye think—" Jed began.

"Well, he had the chance." Billy shrugged. "Can't prove nothin', o' course, but I know the look o' him when he's guilty."

" 'Tis a foul trick! Go bash him!"

Fired with rage, Billy started up, only to sink down again. The old, clammy all gone feeling was in the pit of his stomach.

"Och, I canna be startin' no fight here, the noo," he muttered, gratefully seizing on that valid excuse. He did not look at Jed, but through a long minute he felt that the big man sat rigid, motionless. When Billy did turn his head, Jed had pulled up his left leg and was again looking over the broken boot. As if speaking to his foot Jed said:

"Tell me. Had we not been layin' here under orders, wad ye have gone for him? Tell me true."

The easy lie rushed into Billy's mouth, stopped.

"No," he said miserably.

So loud that several men glanced at him curiously, Jed cried:

"Wull nothin' rouse ye?"

Billy was silent, his face flushed.

"Ye make it ower hard for me," Jed said, struggling against a rising sense of futility. What more could he do? But wait: Billy was at least truthful, Billy kept his word. If he made a promise—? It was worth trying.

"We'll go at this different," Jed resumed. "Mebbe I sh'd've done th' like long ago. Only I hoped . . . no matter. Here 'n noo, ye'll gie me yer word that th' minute this attack's ower, ye'll walk up to yon gent 'n paste th' livin' daylights out o' him . . . If ye break th' promise"—even now, he could not quite bring himself to utter the harshly obvious alternative; instead he said—"but I know, once given, ye won't break yer word."

"I'll—I'll try," Billy whispered.

"Not enough! Say, 'I'll do it'."

"Well—I'll do it," Billy repeated, forcing an assurance he could not make himself feel. Yet more than anything in the world he wanted to feel it, for he knew Jed's patience was wearing thin. And if Jed once turned against him, gone would be the only faith, the only unselfish friendship, he had known in life.

Jed grimaced at his foot, loosed it, pulled his own water bottle from its carrier, handed it to Billy.

"Drink hearty on that, then!"

"Na, Jed. First 'twas th' boot, now yer water."

Jed tipped the nozzle toward the ground.

"Ye want I sh'd pour it awa' so's neither'll have ony?"

"Keep it, keep it. Ye'll need every drop."

A thin trickle spilled from the bottle-mouth. Billy pushed up Jed's hand.

"Ye great gowk! Juist a swaller,then." He touched the bottle to his lips and his parched throat fluttered expectantly. The temptation to drink deeply was almost overwhelming. But at that instant a headquarters runner clattered up, and as Jed turned to look at him, Billy quickly corked the bottle and pushed it against Jed's hand.

Billy saw the runner hand a message to the company commander. The officer scanned it and rose to his feet.

"Attention, all. Our company has been specially detailed to capture 'Old Blusterer'. We advance in five minutes. No matter what assignments the rest of the regiment carries out, remember, our objective is that gun."

AS if in derision, "Old Blusterer" boomed raucous reply. All further noise of firing from the *sangars* was blotted out by the machine gun and mountain battery barrage now laid down by the British to cover the final assault.

Through the din the Durhams presently resumed their advance. They were out in the open at last, with scant cover. Ahead lay only the long, gradual slope leading to the Zakka ridge, the last hundred feet a steep climb. The tribal position had been cannily chosen.

And now all about Billy men were beginning to drop. Men he knew well. There was something coldly unnatural about a modern charge. You did not run, you walked. Altogether missing was the excitement of a hell-for-leather, story-book dash. Rifle at the ready, you moved forward prosaically, like a maneuver performed in the perfect safety of some parade ground. You could almost persuade yourself that the chaps who went down had been ordered to do so, like men acting parts in a sham battle. But . . . but you mustn't look too closely at the fallen.

Billy was aware of Jed, moving along at his right, and turning his head the other way, spied Cadmus not far down the line.

Cadmus! Assuming they all came through, when this was over there'd be Cadmus. There'd always be Cadmus. And suddenly, the recent promise to Jed vivid in his mind—how, how could

he ever make it good? Suddenly he commenced to wonder whether it wouldn't be far better if he never came out of this attack. For he would come out only to fail. Aye, better deliberately to stop one while still he had Jed's faith. Then? Then Jed could think, "Billy would have licked Cadmus. Billy would have kept his promise."

"Old Blusterer's" voice came crashing through all else. But now they were under the gun. The charge from that spewing mouth rushed harmlessly over their heads. Remained only the last hundred feet, the hard last feet against point-blank rifle fire.

Fifty feet.

Billy, disdaining the crouching advance of the others, walked upright. He caught himself laughing insanely.

"Such a bleddy fizzle I can't even get mesel' killed," he yelled, but his voice was blotted out.

In seconds they'd be in the *sangar*. "Old Blusterer" was so near—why, a few more steps and he'd *touch* it.

But all at once the muzzle, which everyone had thought fixed rigidly in a single firing position—all at once the muzzle swung downward.

Billy was squarely before the gun. Head back, he flung out his arms.

"Shoot an' be damned!" he screamed.

Like a huge, brown bat, Jed came flying through space. Billy was buried under him.

"Old Blusterer" roared. . .

DEAFENED by concussion, dazed, Billy dragged himself clear of Jed, rose uncertainly to his feet. That last blast had left a wake of red carnage. As a broad wheel prints its track in tall grass, so had the old cannon taken toll of the Durhams. The attack stalled, wavered, but the remainder of the regiment was rallying below.

Billy's head was clearing. About him the khaki lines were reforming. He saw them surge forward before his eyes sought the prone figure at his feet. Jed's helmet had been pushed to the back of his head; his forehead ran crimson. Oblivious to all else, Billy knelt down.

Jed—old Jed had saved his life, had in this magnificent gesture run true to type, given one more proof of a faith that surely, surely, needed no proving.

God, if he was dead. . . .

A hand dragged at Billy's shoulder.

"No haltin' now," his sergeant yelled close to his ear.

Frantic with apprehension, Billy moved away from that still form.

In the *sangar* the Zakkas were massed about their precious leather cannon. A small wave of Durhams gained the low wall—and were shot or stabbed.

Billy's bayonet bit through a man's belly, stuck. A wiry spearman made a lunge at him, but someone's rifle parried the thrust. As Billy struggled to free his steel from its grisly home, the fighting swirled madly about "Old Blusterer". Reinforcements came—suddenly the Zakkas were outnumbered. Then, gripped in that curious mob panic known to all experienced soldiers, the turbaned defenders turned all at once, fled.

All save one. Billy's spearman sprang, defiantly careless of life, atop the cannon. A Durham raised his rifle, but the platoon sergeant knocked it aside. The N.C.O. caught the Zakka by the seat of his *doti* and, yanking him roughly from his perch. Laughing, the sergeant booted the man to hell across the far wall. The outraged Moslem landed sprawling, picked himself up, shook an impotent fist, and took off after his companions.

The colonel gained the *sangar*, glanced delightedly at "Old Blusterer".

"Well done, you chaps!" He turned to the sergeant. "You and your platoon hang on here, guard the cannon; we'll get it back to civilization somehow. The rest of you follow on—we've a mopping up job to do."

They rattled off down the far slope.

"First," said the sergeant, "we'll heave

these stinkin' bodies out o' this here *sangar*. By that time th' stretcher bearers'll be up, 'n there'll be a place for th' wounded."

CADMUS grounded his rifle and picked up a dead Zakka by the shoulders.

"Gie us a hand wi' the feet," he ordered Billy. But thinking only of Jed, already Billy was climbing back over the *sangar's* near wall.

Billy was almost over the wall when Cadmus laid violent hands on him.

"Lemme go," Billy pleaded. "Jed McKay's down there. He—"

"T'hell wi' him. You too. Ye'll stop here, do as I say. Hear?"

If Jed still lived, quick action might save him.

Billy tore himself free. Full on his nose crashed a hard fist—a blow calculated to knock all the nonsense out of him. The impact sent him reeling against the wall, where his rifle slipped from momentarily nerveless fingers.

Cadmus laughed shortly, hit him again in exactly the same place. Billy sagged. Cadmus clutched a handful of shirt, held him up, shook him.

"Now c'mon 'n help me," he said.

As if from a long way off, Billy felt a new, strange fire of determination kindle. And all at once, starting from somewhere near the ground, Billy's right took Cadmus flush in the eye.

Cadmus sat down hard, a look of foolish incredulity on his face.

"Wot's this, wot's this?" the sergeant demanded, bustling up.

"Aw, sarge, leave 'em be," a man urged. "Th' little draftie's come alive!"

Cadmus was no quitter. He was up, his face black with rage. Rushed. So blind was he with passion that he failed to see the body of the disputed Zakka squarely in his path.

Billy, bringing up another wild roundhouse, wrought better than he knew. For as Cadmus tripped and fell forward, the point of his jaw was exactly in the arc of Billy's whistling fist. With the crack of a rifle shot, bone met bone.

Cadmus stayed down. The sergeant solemnly counted ten over him, then, turning, raised Billy's arm aloft.

"The' winner, gennulmen—winner 'n new champeen!"

"Lemme go — lemme out o' here," Billy panted.

That the evil sway of Cadmus was broken he knew. Fight again they doubtless would, but neither Cadmus nor any man would ever again make a butt of him.

All that—what did it matter if Jed—?

Billy broke from the close-formed ring of men, prey to a dreadful fear. He worked his way into the clear—stopped short.

For there astride the wall, calmly wiping blood from his face—

"Jed!" Billy gasped, in a high, strange falsetto. *"Oh Gawd—Jed."*

"Aye," said Jed, "me. A hunk from yon blunderbuss must o' juist flicked me head. 'Tis nothin'. I been sittin' here watchin' th' brawl. Och"—there was a deep undertone of pride—" 'twas a pretty thing while it lasted, Billy. I told ye ye could lick him."

Grand words, but divil fly away wi' them, Billy was thinking. The only thing that mattered was that Jed lived, was safe. So enormous was Billy's relief that half hysterically, he commenced swearing at his friend.

Jed took it like a happy mastiff.

" 'N another thing," Billy concluded stormily, "ye'll take off that bad boot o' mine this instant! Gie it back t'me, ye big—och—"

Jed, who could have snapped him in two, began meekly unwinding his left puttee.

"Y're a bleddy nuisance," Jed protested mildly. "Aye, a bleddy nuisance. But in all respects, th' boot'll be on th' other foot from now on, I'm thinkin'!"

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

IT'S been a long time since Bertrand W. Sinclair appeared in our pages—eight or nine years. We hope to read his stories often. Here, briefly, is a personal account.

Of Scotch birth and ancestry. Came to America at age of eight. Remained in the west mostly, roaming the littoral from Mexico to the Arctic—which included six or seven years range-riding in Montana when the cattleman was still the biggest figure on the plains.

Am one of the few fiction writers in captivity who finds himself equally at home on a boat or on a horse, which accounts for the fact that I have written a great deal about both the North Pacific Coast and the sagebrush country where the cowpuncher functioned before barbwire and agriculture pushed him aside.

Have lived by the sweat of a fountain pen or a long time. Have had stories from time to time in most of the standard magazines. Eleven published novels, of which four were tales of the old cattle country, and the rest dealing with the Pacific Coast, where I have lived for a long time.

As for "Pigs without Bristles," it is a fairly faithful picture of the adventures and hazards of salmon-trolling on the coast of British Columbia. I have had a shot at it myself three or four different seasons. The notion for this yarn popped into my head last fall lying at anchor in a kelp bed in Queen Charlotte Sound, fog-bound. One of a trolling fleet of seventy boats I had been listening to endless conversation about gear, boats, gas and Deisel engines, salmon and what-not. I sat on the deck in that gray wetness, and listened to a steamer groping her way in the fog, tooting forlornly now and then, and I idly wondered why she was there, away off the regular steamer track. Imagination began to play around that question. The first thing I knew Bill Steele, and the fog, and a pot-bellied villain, and all the possible complications began to arrange themselves in orderly sequence. Stories occur that way. They get born of imagination plus experience. They are not simply manufactured. I let this one simmer in what I am pleased to call my mind for a long time before I wrote it.

A NEWCOMER to our Writers' Brigade is Mike O'Leary. He's a newcomer to fiction also. He omits many details in telling about himself, but fiction seems to be the only legitimate pursuit he'd never tried before.

Mike O'Leary: Born November 1900. Therefore 37, in spite of neighbors in the college town of his residence who constantly mistake him for a freshman. Also in spite of veteran ringworms who insist he must be at least 50, because they remember him fighting 'way back when.'

Lived in the U.S.—except for a few years in Europe, Latin-America and the Orient—all his life. Has several Scotty dogs, a cauliflower ear, and an urge to do a better biography of William Walker than anyone's done thus far.

Gravitated to writing via invitation to do prose-verse for a newspaper syndicate group. Shortly thereafter the muse was liquidated, to the relief of all concerned. Having an unemployed typewriter he began pelting editors with manuscript, of which the story in this issue of *Adventure* is first sizeable one published.

No relation to the lady with the lantern-kicking cow. Ran a flying school for a while. One pupil, a Central American president, was rubbed out by the opposition while seated in the cockpit of his newly-purchased plane,

with motor idling—I heard, afterwards. Probably felt he stood a better chance against the Liberadores' marksmanship than in trusting to his piloting skill, so stood pat. Knowing the quality of both, I thought he made the best possible choice.

So much for the author of "Defender of The Faith."

I'M hoping that photograph of a mountain lion comes out plainly in your copy. Photographs are difficult to manage on this paper, and Jack Tooker's remarkable picture, taken in poor light, is more of a gamble than most.

Tooker is another new man in the Brigade. We'll have other short articles from him, I hope, because there surely are few men who know our big game animals as he does. Accounting for three hundred and eight lions proves plenty of sand and knowledge.

I am considered an authority on wild life, having hunted and studied all kinds of North American game from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic, for more than 25 years.

I was for several years predatory animal killer for the Grand Canyon National Park.

Lion hunting has always been a special hobby of mine. I killed my first lion in the Santa Monica Mountains of Southern California at the age of 14. That same year, 1902, I tried to kill a huge grizzly bear in northern Arizona. My rifle was too small; I narrowly escaped death, and the wounded bear got away. There were several stock-killing grizzlies in the country at the time, and lions were so plentiful around the Grand Canyon Country that colts could not be raised, and grown horses were often killed by them.

Hunting dangerous game became my hobby. I have killed nine stock-killing grizzlies; roped 52 lions and killed or taken alive 308 lions.

IT would be interesting to all the comrades to turn up examples of American military and naval tradition as H. Bedford-Jones does in "West Point Gray." Any readers know of any others?

Bedford-Jones tells us about his story in these words:

Anyone who has seen movie weekly shots of the West Point cadets on parade, can see just about how the U. S. regulars of this story looked in 1814. If there's anything riles me up, it's to hear somebody from across the water prate about the historic traditions of this foreign corps and that, and say with a condescending air that the United States of course can't understand such things—blah! Our flag is the oldest national ensign in existence; and when some *ancien* of the Legion points to the word "Camerone," (which happens to be misspelled) on the Legion records, we can point to San Antonio on the map. Our Foreign Legion died there. It died all over the place, in fact. And it usually died with a darned sight better reason than stands to show on the emblazoned regimental flags of foreign armies.

This story is a case in point. Nothing very heroic about Chippewa and Lundy's Lane, maybe; depends on how you look at it. But here is one of our traditions brought to life, I hope. As a matter of fact, the news of Chippewa caused bells, bonfires and tremendous celebrations in the United States. It reversed the despair caused by the constant reverses hitherto. The follow-up of Lundy's Lane increased this feeling, and demonstrated that the backwoods farmers could stand to cold steel just as well as the most disciplined old regiments of the line.

Just to confirm the matter of the gray uniform, I wrote to West Point.

Colonel Hughes, Adjutant of West Point, writes:

"Reply has been delayed due to the fact that we have been making an extensive search for accurate information. The net result is that, in 1816, by an order from the office of the Adjutant and Inspector General, the blue uniform of 1814 was changed to gray. A copy of the order is not available. The early permanent records of the Military Academy were destroyed by fire in 1838.

"It has been stated frequently that the gray uniform was adopted out of compliment to General Scott and his troops who, clothed in gray (due to the inability of the government to furnish them with blue) had on July 4, 1814, won a victory over the British at Chippewa."

THE leather cannon in Perry Adams' story "A Change of Boots" calls for comment, and Perry Adams anticipates it here:

It seems possible that some readers of my story in this issue, "A Change of Boots", may question the existence of "Old Blusterer", the *leather* cannon. Anticipating more or

less reasonable doubt, I am in the doubly unfortunate position of being unable to state that I saw this gun myself, although the fact that it existed was common knowledge on the Frontier. It seemed probable that my old standby, The Wise Man of Peshawar, could throw some light on the subject, so at the time I was planning this particular story, I wrote him for corroborative details about the leather cannon. He replies:

> "The leather cannon you ask about was, of course, a reality. I do not know it by the nickname you give—'Old Blusterer'—but such a gun certainly was in Afridi hands at about the time you served here and afterward. Like yourself, I never saw this affair, but enquiry reveals that such guns were formerly made in China and, it seems, in Tibet as well; somehow, one of these got across the border into tribal hands. I can't imagine how."

This was all very well by way of casual confirmation, but it wasn't in the least the sort of detailed description I'd hoped the Wise Man might be able to furnish. However, I'd about decided to let it go at that, when by accident I stumbled on the very sort of thing I'd despaired of finding. Not only is there a full description of leather cannon, but a photograph of a pair of them, taken in the Arsenal Museum at Katmandu, capitol of Nepal. Picture and description are in Volume 1, on page 263, of Perceval Landon's great work, *Nepal* (London: Constable & Co., Ltd., 1928). Description follows:

> "An interesting relic of other days, that it would perhaps be impossible to parallel elsewhere, consists of two leather guns. It has long been a subject of discussion whether, as a matter of fact, the ascription of leather guns to the Tibetans was not due to some mistake of an interpreter or translator. But here in the Katmandu Museum are two specimens that must have been taken from the Tibetans in 1856. The larger is 44 inches long and 20 inches in diameter at the narrowest part. The calibre is 5 inches, and the thickness of the leather 1½ inches at the muzzle. The second is 32.3 inches in length and 18 inches in diameter. The calibre is 2¼ inches and the thickness of the leather at the muzzle is 2¼ inches. It is commonly said of these weapons that they only survive four discharges, but it is probable that a thin tube of iron took off at least some of the force of the explosion, and it would seem unlikely that the Saddlers' Company of Tibet would have taken the trouble to fashion such cumbrous pieces for so brief a use. There, however, are the guns and, as will be seen, they have been provided with most of the extraordinary appearance of gun-metal or steel weapons. It is to be hoped, however, that the Maharaja will give orders for the display of such unique and interesting relics inside the Museum itself, and not in the little open court where they now lie exposed to sun and wind and rain."

Although the foregoing does not explain how a leather cannon came into Pathan hands, it should, I hope, dispel any doubt as to the actual existence of these strange weapons.

IT'S always a pleasure to us to hear of new achievements among the *Ask Adventure* experts. Often they're doing things that make us feel as proud as a kid at an American Legion parade when he sees his old man come marching by.

For example, Donald McNicol is our radio expert, and none better. Some of the comrades ask him questions about cycles or heterodynes, etc., that I don't understand, and he writes them detailed advice that likewise I can't comprehend. Everybody's satisfied. But I didn't know until the recent appearance of Donald McNicol's book "The Amerindians" that he is a lifelong student and authority on the American Indian. He was along the Saskatchewan in 1895 looking up the participants in the Riel revolts of 1885; he went all over the Big Horn country studying Custer's defeat; he has covered on foot many of the Indian and trapper trails along the Ottawa and in the muskeg country between Lake Superior and Hudson Bay; the Missouri from Pierre to Fort Benton; much of the Yellowstone; British Columbia, Southern California, Oregon, Utah, New Mexico; living among Indians and gathering information about their ancestors and putting together a notable collection of Indian relics of all sorts. His new book is a hist-

ory of the red tribes and their relations with the whites, their displacement and what became of them—a valuable contribution to American history.

Paul L. Anderson, photography expert, also has surprised us. His books on photography will be found in any bibliography on the subject as standard American works. We knew that, but we didn't know that Mr. Anderson is an accredited authority on the history of Rome, and has also published books on that subject that are used as school and college reference works. There'll be another one within a year.

OUT on the Great Lakes they've got their own humorous ways of navigating, we're told by Thomas Q. Lempertz, of Hollywood, California. Some of the skippers let the government experts go ahead and pick what markers they want for the charts, but for themselves they use some landmarks in the backyards along the way.

There's a point brought up by Ralph Perry, of the staff, who was an ensign in the war and likes these questions of navigation. He heard on salt water that a compass is of little use on Lake Superior because of ore bodies, and there's one spot in particular, where presumably some great iron deposit lies beneath the lake, where the needle is brother to a roulette wheel. He'd like to know how much truth there is in this.

Gentlemen:—In the friendly spirit of the *Camp-Fire* let me break a lance or two with Mr. Robert Carse whose story "Man Power" appears in *Adventure* for March. If I question a couple of points in the yarn let it be known that I do so only with the friendliest of intentions and with the knowledge that I may be completely wrong since it is more than a decade since I've handled a bucket of soogey on the chain of lakes. Things can change a lot in that time.

Mr. Carse speaks of the ship's clock striking four bells. Personally, I have never heard of ship's bells being struck on the lakes and if it is done it is the unusual and not the usual, probably the innovation of some salty skipper. The Lakes are not without tradition (as stories of Daylight Harry who never took a ship through the rivers at night, or the rivalry as to which packet braves the ice first each year after insurance begins on April 15) but naturally there is a lack of salt water tradition. For example, there are few if any sextants on the lakes, voyaging being carried on by dead reckoning and land marks. Some of the skippers and mates seem to make a point of ignoring government markers and hold to some of the back houses on the rivers that have been used for two generations for piloting. "Put her nose on that (building) there and hold her till I tell you to change," they sometimes tell a wheelsman. Recently though, radio compass has been coming in, I am told.

Mr. Carse speaks of a wireless message coming to the ship while still out on the lake. Again this is the unusual and not the usual. None of the Steel Trust (Pittsburgh Steamship Co.) boats, *Kinney, Hanna, Jones & Lockland, Tomlinson, Cleveland Cliffs* or other boats that I knew of carried either a wireless set or an operator. Of course I refer to wireless and not commercial radio. I did once hear of an attempt to set up a wireless aboard an ore carrier. I believe it was on the *Shenango* (though I may be mistaken) under the late Captain Fox. The old man put a stop to the whole thing when he learned that the deck watch, who fathered the enterprise, like all enthusiasts began to spend more time with his condensers and what not than to watch the patent log, take soundings or handle the deck engines.

I liked Mr. Carse's touch about Marine City. There's a traditional lake town for you. Wives run out and hold the baby up while mates sound a whistle salute to the family. Marine City was also the location of the Lake Carriers' school for pilots and mates.

I want you to understand that I realize that the points I have brought up are not at all important. It is quite possible, I know, for an independently owned craft to be operated along any lines her skipper-owner (or owners) please. The story I think was mighty interesting and worthy of *Adventure.*

COMRADE A. P. Hughes, of Dutch Flat, California, sends a snowslide of his own down over that story of the slide in Chilkoot Pass. Perhaps this letter will reach the eye of Thomas Riggs, and he'll tell us what he knows of it, because he was there at the time.

The story of the Chilkoot Slide makes good reading, but must be taken "cum grano salis." At the time the Slide occurred, I was hauling my grub in to Dawson somewhere between Skagway and Lake Bennett over the White Pass. I read the story of the Slide, and spoke to several eye witnesses later anent same, and as far as I can now remember those stories don't seem to agree with Mr. Holbrook's. With regard to some of Holbrook's reported statements, the facts are quite otherwise. First by the number of men going from Dyea, i.e., 50,000. This is sheer nonsense. According to the semi official rough census taken during the summer of '98, there were in and around Dawson and the adjoining Creeks some 40,000 people all told: This estimate was obtained mostly through the Police records, and included the old timers of '96, and '97. Not many persons got by the Police posts without registering, but there were a number of men turned back, and some others who died, or gave up and returned to where they started from. Now, the majority of the mushers were landed at Skagway, and went in over the White Pass: I should guess that for everyone who went over the Chilkoot, five went over the White Pass. Reasons: Dyea had a very bad harbour, very limited landing facilities, and town accommodations, and altho a shorter trip to Lake Bennett yet with all a very much harder pass to take supplies over. Coffee may have fetched a dollar a cup on the Chilkoot summit, but, nowhere else. This also applies to the "hour's bed." Once the musher reached Lake Bennett, his more arduous labors were over. There was no overland route at that time to Dawson, except from some police posts; everybody and every pound of supplies going by boat on lakes, and rivers. The statement that "Holbrook's last camp was ninety miles below Selkirk" is also nonsense. Selkirk is somewhere around four hundred miles from Lake Bennett, and no sane man would attempt to haul grub, or travel over that distance when he could build a raft, or boat and float down. The story of old "Man Smith being buried under 23 feet of snow for two and a half hours, with the snow so hard and compressed it had to be cut out in chunks" and then being rescued alive is, to say, the least—very strange. I have never been stamped under that amount of snow, nor have I met anyone from beyond who had: So it may be possible. I do not criticise the act of stamping three men underfoot: No one knows what he might, or might not do, under the circumstances. My old friend Tommy Riggs (afterwards Governor of Alaska) and his partner, (known at that time as "handsome Harry and reckless Tom") were packing on the Dyea Trail at that time, and if Thomas Riggs is still alive, he should be easy to locate, and would give you the true story of the event.

Yours faithfully,

A. P. Hughes

Dutch Flat, California.

George N. Stilwell of Charlotte, N. C., asked in Lost Trails for Sgt. Jesse H. Scarborough. He writes us thanks—"I have received a letter from my old army friend, the first direct news from him since 1925."

Ask Adventure

information
you can't get elsewhere

A SACRED basket from India enshrouded in mystery.

Request:—I am the owner of a sacred basket which came from a temple in the Port of Colombo, Ceylon.

This basket has been in the family for a number of years, having been brought back by a great uncle of mine. He had some kind of a civil service position for the British government in Colombo; and he was well liked by the natives. During the famine, somewhere around 1889, he spent his entire salary for a year and other personal funds, having rice shipped in for the natives. In appreciation of this, they gave him this beautiful old sacred basket from their temple. This is the brief story I have to tell you. There is probably a great deal that I do not know. He was a man of means because he built a new temple in or around the Port of Colombo for the natives and named it the "Pen-Fen." Also at one time owned land which he sold to Thomas Lipton for plantations years ago.

I've written the British Museum but have been unable to get very much out of them except that they have a basket similar to mine, that the basket was genuine, that it was made of finely split Rattan Cane and black fibre of the Kittul Palm. The coloring is black and yellow which I have been told are the colors of the temples in that part of the world.

Now would it be possible to trace it and get an idea of its real value? Could you tell me of any collectors interested in such things?

I might add that it has a cover and a secret lock on it and it was used to carry on sacred ceremonies, and contained their betel nut and bread at such times.

—Gordon C. Smith, Long Beach, Calif.

Reply by Mr. V. B. Windle:—Your most interesting letter reached me a few days ago and I have delayed answering in order to check my files as thorough as possible. I am sorry that I can not help you much.

Ceylon, in keeping with most of Asia, is a land of baskets. Even rocks in a quarry are moved out by means of baskets and excavations for houses are handled in a like manner. And, just as you say, they are used to bring food and offerings to the temples and to their relatives long departed.

I know for a fact that the same baskets used for carrying the laundry to the river for washing may be used to carry an offering to a temple. On the other hand there are no doubt new baskets used to carry food, etc., to the temples and left there, probably at the foot of one of the gods.

I think the reason we cannot get a line on your basket is probably due to its age. It would be a most valuable article and no double has a most interesting history. I suggest you write to the United States Consulate, Colombo, Ceylon, sending a photograph and asking them to see what they can find. Some of the consuls are very good about a thing like that and, as their staff is made up of local people, they may learn something of importance from them. Sorry I'm not in Colombo at present or I would be glad to do it for you. And I'm sorry, too, that I can't give you anything more satisfactory in the way of a lead.

THE holster should fit the gun like a glove fits the hand.

Request:—I'd like to make a Western type holster. I have all of the material but no pattern. I'd appreciate it if you could send me information on how to make a holster.

James Van Ness, Wetmore, Mich.

Reply by "Old Man" Wiggins:—Well, I like to tinker around with awls, leather, and revolvers too; I will be only too glad to advise you as best I may.

First, I get a proper piece of heavy leather, and soak it well. Next, I have the gun well greased and wrapped in greased paper, and laying it on the leather, roll the material around the wrapped gun to get the proper fit. After that I cut the design out, and sew it up with good waxed ends.

Then I place the wrapped gun in the holster, and let the leather dry on it. I put it where I can keep an eye on it for several days, to see that it is working out properly, and that the gun doesn't rust.

After the leather has 'set' to the proper form, I remove the revolver, and give the holster a good coat of pure neetsfoot oil, to preserve it and make it waterproof. I may add that the holsters I oiled for the State Police eight years since, still do fine service.

BRIGHT colored raiment makes good trade goods.

Request:—I am taking the liberty of writing you for information on trading in the South Sea islands.

1. What type and size boat is most commonly used? We have a well built yawl, 45 feet in length. Would this be too small?

2. Is it necessary to obtain a permit from the governments owning the various islands to trade there?

3. What island products are most commonly dealt in?

4. Are the products paid for in cash or trade goods?

5. If trade goods are used, what articles are carried?

6. Where are the island products disposed of?

My partner and I are thinking of making a trip through the South Seas when our enlistments expire, and as we are not well equipped with money we must try to find some way to make the trip pay a part of its expense.

Floyd L. Johns, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Reply by Mr. William McCreadie, Suva, Fiji:—I don't think that private trading such as you propose will prove very profitable. The old days are gone when private traders did well dodging about among island groups. Now all groups are under ordered law with customs tariffs (usually too high for my fancy) and with landing deposits or harbour and wharf dues that eat up profits.

1. The boat you have will answer the purpose. It will prove handy if you have auxiliary power as currents at reef entrances are often dangerous for sail only.

2. You will have to pay dues at any group depending upon your tonnage, and also a trading license.

3. The chief island products are copra, first in all groups. In Tahiti there are also vanilla, sugar, rum, pearl shell. There is also a small trade to be done in trocas shell or *sici* as it is called in Fiji.

4. These would be paid for chiefly in cash as natives like cash best, but, of course, many would take trade goods if you had anything attractive enough. Natives today are very keen and know the value of white goods.

5. It would be impossible for me to give a list of what goods to take, but a large variety of colored flash satin-finish cloths and prints, etc., with cane knives, mirrors, beads in small lots, cheap scarves well colored, pipes, cheap crockery, say cups and plates, all would be useful. Also some shorts in khaki and cheap singlets, towels, and shirts.

6. The produce would find a best market with island big houses who will always buy copra. French firms will buy vanilla, etc. Tortoise-shell is also obtainable in small lots.

As to the best groups to trade in, I would visit Papeete and ask Mr. Sam Russell there (an agent) what is best for you to do. But I cannot think it is a profitable game in any case.

Best of good luck, however.

HINTS on handy gear for a bicycle trip to Mexico City.

Request:—I am considering a bicycle trip to begin in July and to include the new road from Laredo, Texas, to Mexico City.

I shall have to give attention to the lightness of my gear. A sleeping bag and blanket will be necessary. Can you recommend any particular bag which fits these requirements: Tight, warm for cool mountain temperatures, sturdy for rough handling in adverse terrain, waterproof—both bag and sack or cover of

a reasonable price? Do all bags require mattresses? If so, are all bags equipped with mattresses?

I intend to carry a canteen, a folding cook outfit as used by boy scouts, a sterno cook stove which is very small. Everything must be as compact as possible. Can you suggest any necessary compact kits for such a trip? Any suggestions from you will be greatly appreciated.

—Kenneth Beaver, Philadelphia, Pa.

Reply by Mr. Paul M. Finke:—I know of no sleeping bag with mattress that would be light enough and compact enough for your purpose. The best I can suggest is the A. M. C. sleeping bag sold by the Appalachian Mountain Club, 5 Joy Street, Boston, for $10.00. This weighs 2¾ pounds and is heavy enough for temperatures down to frost. It is not practical to have a sleeping bag waterproof, for this will lead to condensation from body moisture and the bag will become clammy and damp. To protect you from dew and light showers there is offered by the same Club a combined poncho, tent, floor and bag cover of very light waterproof cloth at $5.50. If you feel the need of a mattress I would recommend one of the air mattresses or "blow-beds" offered by so many outfitters. L. L. Bean, Freeport, Maine, lists one size forty-eight by twenty-five inches, weight fifty-nine ounces at $5.25. Abercrombie & Fitch, Madison Ave. & 45th Street, New York City, has a similar one weighing five pounds at $6.75.

If you have access to a sewing machine and want to save some money you can make your own bag, just as I have done. Get a two or three pound roll of wool batting from one of the big mail-order houses, and make yourself a comforter, using cambric or percale for the cover. Fold this in the middle lengthwise and sew up, across one end and half way up the side, making a bag. I usually sleep on the ground with this bag, and while it is a little hard until you get used to it, scooping out hollows a couple of inches deep to fit your hips and shoulders will help a lot.

A Boy Scout cook kit will serve your purposes well, but I would recommend against the Sterno kit. It is hard to procure fuel for this in some of the country you will traverse. Instead get a tiny Primus stove from the Sandvik Saw & Tool Corp., 109 Lafayette St., New York—the kind that uses kerosene, which you can get anywhere.. This is much more efficient for your purposes than the Sterno outfit, and will weigh little, if any, more, with the added consideration of using a fuel that is obtainable anywhere.

THE facetious rainbow trout.

Request:—For at least three years I have wanted to write and ask you a few questions, but each spring I swore I would find out for myself. My batting average to date is zero. So I am now come before the seat of all fishing knowledge. One fellow said "Write to Ozark Ripley. He knows darned near everything!" So if you are unable to answer, I'll always think you *should* have known.

1. Why do rainbows in the Rogue River strike short at times? Sometimes it is quite a hard strike but they do not have the hook in their mouths.

2. Why do they refuse, at times, any fly except one drawn sharply along the surface? This, of course, makes for short casts and small fish.

3. Why do they jump several inches in the air and pick up the fly, some times, on their way down?

4. I have seen good trout come, time after time, clear across a small stream to the same fly, slap it with their tails and go back. Change flies—same result.

5. I've stood waist deep and caught *nothing* on *any* fly I offered, while trout up to a pound or more jumped close enough to splash water on me, not once but often. This is a late afternoon stunt.

Well, I still contend that any man who does that for three years straight is either a fisherman or balmy—probably both.

Any information or suggestions would be very gratefully received, for I am already opening my tackle cabinet door, saying "Heck!" and closing it firmly—for a few hours.

—W. W. Coe, Long Beach, Calif.

Reply by "Ozark Ripley":—When it comes to explaining the habits of fish, we do a whole lot of guessing.

1. Many times when fish strike short, merely taking hold and then letting go they have been feeding heavily and are not eager for food.

2. Oftimes rainbows refuse any fly, though observing it carefully while not feeding or in mood to strike, yet hit at a moving one such as you describe thinking it is a pestiferous minnow that they want to scare out of their way. Salmon do it sometimes, also brook trout, and occasionally small mouth bass. Often small mouth bass strike short.

3. I have tried to explain this satisfactorily to myself by saying the fish were overeager in their rise and missed their objective but caught it coming down. I have a moving picture of a Trout taking a fly in this manner.

I had a six pound Nipigon brook trout come from under a log, miss the fly, but get it as he came down, though he had to go across the log to do it. Then one time I caught one that took the fly in this manner though he missed it a foot coming up. I found five leeches on the fish and think he was jumping from annoyance and just saw the fly as he returned to water.

4. This slapping of lures with tails does not apply alone to trout, and seems to convey the idea that the fish found the fly was something other than he thought it was and expressed his dissatisfaction. Many times I have seen muskies do it to spoons, plugs and large surface baits.

5. The same thing has happened to me many times, but I can't explain it satisfactorily. Perhaps the fish did not want anything and were jumping in play or trying to rid themselves of some small parasite. Sometimes they do it when they are affected with worms which are all over their bodies.

Late one afternoon I was fishing a rainbow stream. The day had been very warm. It suddenly turned cool. Then I saw five rainbows chasing each other like boys, and when one would get close the other would jump out of the water. They kept it up for an hour. Often singles do this jumping without any sign of an insect or anything else being nearby. No answer is worth a darn until we can think as a rainbow. Often something about a fly, the leader, or your own movements which you did not think were imparted to the fish, cause it to continue coming for the fly and merely touch, then quickly bore deep.

The following might interest you, since it is a case of rainbows jumping without apparent reason. Two years ago I was fishing in the Lake Louise region in Alberta, just about sunset. I saw whitefish feeding close to the surface. (They call them locally, graylings.) The rainbows seemed to follow back of the whitefish. I could not understand the reason. Then I saw they were after tiny little insects which it took time to discover. The insects looked like the tiniest particles of soot, as they were black. In every instance they were behind the whitefish.

I hope you have a good season.

THE Hudson Bay Company coined a Beaver.

Request:—Can you give me any idea as to the value of coins issued by the Hudson Bay Company around the beginning of the 18th century. Some thirty-five years ago I went on an exploring expedition to the country north and east of Hudson Bay in the territory now known as Ungava, northern part of Quebec. While at Great Whale River the factor of the H. B. Company Trading Post there gave me two sets of coins bearing value as follows: One-eighth, one-fourth, one-half and one whole Beaver. The Beaver was the par value of all exchange in trade for furs or merchandise and these coins were issued to the Eskimos when they brought in their catch of fur or sperm oil.

The series I have were minted for the company around 1700 but owing to a mistake in the die one side read E. N. instead of E. M., (this meaning East Main) with the figures on it to denote the value, as stated above. The coins, by the way, varied in size and would correspond to our fifty cent piece, twenty-five cent piece, dime and nickel.

On the reverse side was the Hudson Bay coat of arms with the Latin words, "*Pro Pelle Cutem*" meaning skin for skin. The metal in these coins are copper and brass, I believe. At least they resemble that alloy. I am told these coins should be valuable as there are none known to exist of this coinage except in perhaps a museum or at Hudson Bay Company headquarters in London and Montreal.

I shall appreciate anything you can tell me about them and their present value to collectors of rare coins.

—J. A. Osborne, New Port Richey, Fla.

Reply by Mr. Howland Wood:—The four Hudson Bay tokens that you describe were struck in 1857 and were in use for a few years. For some time these were considered very rare. A number of years ago a large lot of these that had never been put in circulation were found in Montreal so that today they are not really rare, although somewhat scarce.

Dealers ask about $5.00 apiece for them or between $15, and $20, a set. Just what you could get for them I don't know—probably about half.

TWO-wheeling across a continent—in record time.

Request:—I read that Earl Robinson rode from New York to Los Angeles in seventy-seven hours and fifty-three minutes and broke the record. What I would like to know is, did he have to follow a certain route? If so, what were the road numbers? How was he timed? I don't think a person could drive for seventy-seven hours steady. So did he have to stop over-night in certain cities or did he stop whenever he felt tired?

What is a Jack Pine Run and how is it conducted?

—Walter Henning, Hoboken, N. J.

Reply by Mr. Charles M. Dodge:—Yes, Earl Robinson knocked the previous transcontinental speed record all apart last year —in fact, knocked just thirty-eight hours and forty-three minutes off the previous best time across the country established by the Whiting brothers last May, 1935.

He was officially timed out of New York at 12:01 A. M. on a Monday, clocked at Lewiston, Penn., at 4:00 A. M. By 8:07 P. M. the same day he was tearing through Huntington, Indiana; at 8:15 that evening they clocked him in Peoria, Ill.; the dealer with official checker at Omaha, Neb., clocked him through at 8:55 Tuesday morning; by 8:30 that night he swept through Cheyenne, Wyoming; Provo, Utah, by noon Wednesday and at 1:54 Thursday morning officially checked into Los Angeles, California, by the A. M. A. referee, Al Kloogler. Seventy-seven hours and fifty-three minute of elapsed time between New York and Los Angeles, on the road. That's travelling.

But on June 13, 1936, a fellow by the name of Rody Rodenburg, riding an Indian Sport Scout 45, clipped six hours and thirteen minutes off that record, which was made with a Harley. He started from New York city at 8:15 A. M. June 17th checked out by Bill Heiserman, official referee for the district, covered the 3305 mile route across the Alleghenies, Mississippi, Kansas, over the Rockies and into Los Angeles, officially checked in by the same Al Kloogler, in seventy-one hours and twenty minutes. That is even more travelling.

Timing is all official along the route, under the auspices of the American Motorcycle Association, and the riders drove steadily. Both are old time racers, and both, as you can well believe, can take it.

THERE'S no way to recover pictures on a spoiled roll of film.

Request:—In the near future I plan to take a world cruise on a private yacht where I will have to do my own developing, and keep supplied with film between ports.

1. How should 16 mm. movie film be packed before and after exposure?

2. How long will unexposed film keep in good condition on a cruise of this type?

3. What precautions must be taken in developing film in the tropics?

4. How does the light in the tropics effect the exposure length?

5. Would panchromatic film be the best all around film to take along? Would the use of filters be of much help? What ones?

In short, any advice at all on taking, developing, and packing, 16 mm. motion picture film will be received with much rejoicing.

—Winthrop R. Sawyer, Foxboro, Mass.

Reply by Mr. Paul L. Anderson:—

1. All film for tropical use should be packed in individual sealed tin boxes at the factory, and should not be opened except for *immediate* use.

It should not be re-packed after exposure, but should be processed at once. In extreme conditions of heat and humidity, even a delay of two or three hours may ruin the film, and there is no way of re-packing which will prevent this.

2. If packed as recommended, it will keep in good condition up to the expiration date given by the manufacturers. Generally speaking, ortho film will be good for a year or more, thus packed.

3. Plenty! Write to the Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, New York, for their leaflet on TROPICAL DEVELOPMENT. This tells the whole story very concisely.

4. Generally speaking, the light all-year-around in the tropics—that is, between 20° North and 20° South—is a trifle stronger than the light in June in 40° North. This, however, is not invariably true, for the early morning and late evening light in June in 40° North is stronger than for the same hours in the tropics. You had better use an exposure meter.

5. I do not believe that pan. film would offer any advantages over ortho, for your work. Either would do the trick all right. By all means use a fully-correcting filter. For information about which one to use, write to the makers of the film you plan to take along.

Write to R. P. Stineman, 918 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, California, for information about his method of handling film, and to the makers of the film you are going to use for information about reversal. You know 16-mm. movie film is a reversing film, and it is quite a trick to process it.

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29x4.50-20	2.25	.85	31x4	2.65	.85	34x4½	3.45 1.15
30x4.50-21	2.40	.85	32x4	2.95	.85	30x5	3.65 1.35
28x4.75-19	2.45	.95	33x4	2.95	.85	33x5	3.75 1.45
29x4.75-20	2.50	.95	34x4	3.25	.85	36x5	3.95 1.55
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.05	32x4½	3.35	1.15		
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.05	HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES (High Pressure)				
5.25-17	2.90	1.15	Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires Tubes
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.15	30x5	$4.25	$1.95	34x7	$10.95 $3.95
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.15	33x5	3.95	1.45	38x7	10.95 3.95
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.15	34x5	4.25	2.00	36x8	11.45 3.95
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.15	32x6	7.95	2.75	40x8	13.25 4.15
5.50-17	3.35	1.15	36x6	8.95	3.95		
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.15	TRUCK BALLOON TIRES				
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.15	Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires Tubes
6.00-17	3.40	1.15	6.00-20	$3.75	$1.65	7.50-20	$6.95 2.75
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.15	6.50-20	4.45	1.95	8.25-20	8.95 $4.95
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.15	7.00-20	5.95	2.95	9.00-20	10.95 5.65
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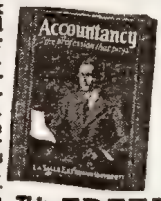

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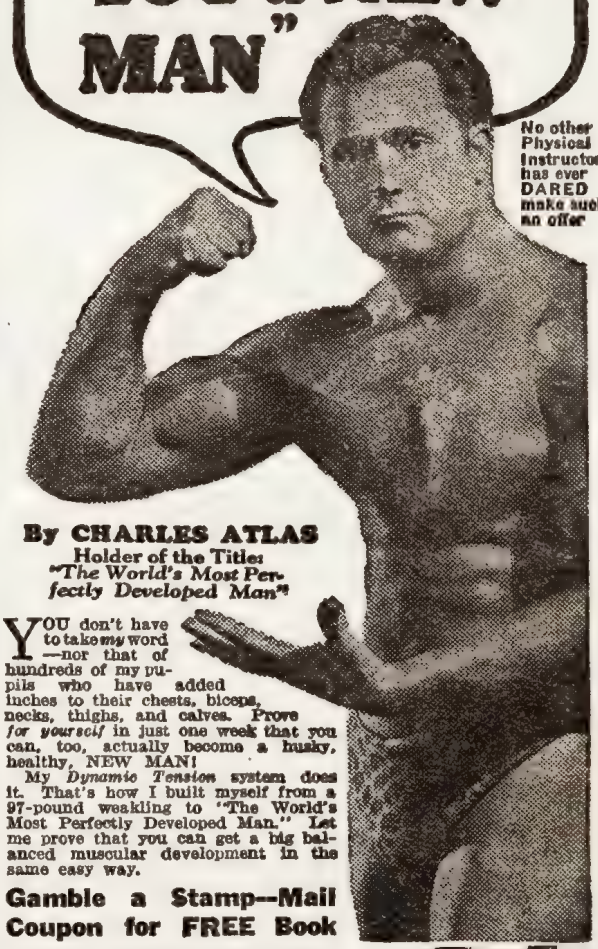

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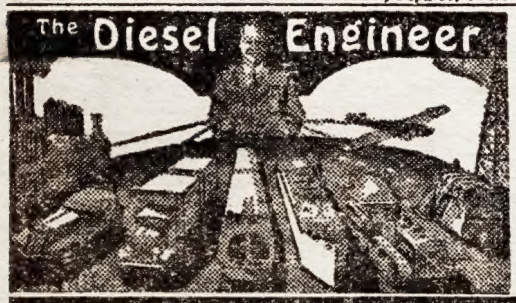

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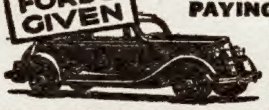

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